The Scope Expansion of International Organizations

Qi Liu*

Abstract

Global challenges such as climate change and artificial intelligence evolve rapidly, yet international organizations (IOs) respond unevenly. When do IOs adapt to new challenges, and why do some expand while others do not? Although states design IOs to address specific cooperation problems, bureaucracies operationalize these mandates and can reshape what IOs do in practice. I argue that IO bureaucrats are entrepreneurial but power-structured. They adapt selectively to global challenges in order to seek resources, attention, and recognition from the major principal state. Through changing staff expertise and tasking, they change the scope of their IO to address issues prioritized by the major principal. Empirically, I introduce job postings as a new measure of IO operations and compile an original dataset of 630,500 postings from 234 IOs (2007-2024). Using a difference-in-differences design exploiting the rising salience of climate and AI challenges, I show that IOs expand their scope only when the major principal prioritizes the issue. When the major principal's priority shifts away, the IO contracts. The study reveals how state power in IOs shapes the global governance agenda.

Keywords: International organizations, global governance, bureaucratic politics, institutional change, agenda-setting

*Qi Liu is a PhD candidate in the Department of Government, Harvard University. Email: qi_liu@g.harvard.edu.
I am grateful to Christina Davis, Jeffry Frieden, Kosuke Imai, Stephen Chaudoin, Christoph Mikulaschek, Naijia Liu, Patrick Bayer, Yoshiharu Kobayashi, Andrew Lugg, Mark Copelovitch, Julia Gray, Minju Kim, Ryan Powers, participants at the 18th Political Economy of International Organization (PEIO) conference, the 2025 International Political Economy Society (IPES) conference, the 2025 Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) conference, the 2025 American Political Science Association (MPSA) conference, Harvard IR Research Workshop, Harvard Grad PE Research Workshop, and the Imai research group for comments on previous versions of this paper.

1 Introduction

Global challenges such as climate change and artificial intelligence constantly reshape the need for global governance. Yet international organizations (IOs) differ strikingly in how they respond. For example, among development banks responding to climate change, some IOs move quickly to address the challenge: the Asian Development Bank has rebranded itself as Asia's Climate Bank. Others, facing the same challenge, remain cautious. The Islamic Development Bank devotes less attention to climate issues, and the World Bank's engagement has fluctuated over time. These contrasts are puzzling. These development banks confront the same climate challenge and were designed under similar core mandates, yet some adapt dramatically while others do not.

Existing theories argue that states design IOs to solve specific cooperation problems (Keohane, 1984; Koremenos et al., 2001), yet global challenges frequently emerge and the salience of existing problems can wax or wane.[1] In practice, IOs frequently operate beyond their core mandates: the IMF engages with gender and climate, UNESCO works on health, and many IOs now address artificial intelligence. How IOs respond to these shifting global priorities is central to understanding both the adaptability and the limits of global governance. Why do certain IOs expand into new issue areas?

I argue that IO bureaucracies adapt selectively to global challenges. Bureaucrats are neither passive implementers of state orders nor fully autonomous entrepreneurs. Instead, they are motivated by two sets of considerations: material interests, including job security and career advancement, and professional fulfillment, which is the opportunity to participate in substantial initiatives, projects, and policy-making processes. Both depend directly on whether the organization receives sustained attention and resources from its major principal state. As a result, bureaucrats act strategically to develop new expertise and reallocate operational tasks in response to shifts in principal

[1] See, for example, "Why we need a world environment organisation," The Guardian, 28 October 2009, retrieved from `https://www.theguardian.com/environment/cif-green/2009/oct/28/world-environment-organisation` and the 2024 APSA panel on "The Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence": `https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/apsa/apsa24/index.php?program_focus=view_session&selected_session_id=2146356&cmd=online_program_direct_link&sub_action=online_program`.

priorities. When a new issue arises that is a priority for its major principal, an IO's bureaucracy will expand its scope to address it. When major principal priorities shift away, they contract. When the major principal remains indifferent, bureaucracies have little incentive to adapt, and IOs stay within their original mandates.

This logic explains why global shocks do not automatically translate into institutional change. Bureaucratic entrepreneurship exists, but it is structured by power: IO bureaucracies initiate changes in scope only when doing so helps strengthen continued attention and resources from the major principal state whose support is most consequential for the organization's resources, leadership, and long-term survival. As a result, adaptation in global governance is selective and power-structured.

To test this argument, I analyze how IO staff tasking evolves across issue areas over time. Charters and mandates outline what states designed IOs to do, but a crucial dimension of how IOs function in practice is the tasks their staff are assigned to perform. Staff composition and tasking define the operational scope of an organization. While bureaucracies cannot directly alter the mandate, they shift expertise and redirect daily work, thereby redefining the function and role of an IO. Traditional measures of IO behavior (mandates, treaties, reports, etc.) capture formal scope but not what IOs actually do. I therefore introduce job postings as a new source of evidence. Job postings specify concrete tasks and required skills, providing a direct window into bureaucratic operations. I compile an original dataset of 630,500 postings from 234 IOs (2007-2024) and show that IO staff frequently work on areas outside their formal mandates, with issue priorities shifting over time.

Focusing on climate change and artificial intelligence, two global challenges that rose sharply in salience, I demonstrate that following the ChatGPT release and the Paris process, IOs whose core mandates did not originally include these domains nonetheless expand into them, but only when their major principal elevate these issues as priorities. In contrast, IOs contract from it when the major principal shifts away its attention. I show a decrease in U.S.-dominated IOs' focus on climate after Trump won the election in 2016. Elite interviews with 14 staff members

who have experience across 11 IOs, half of whom hold senior or leadership positions, suggest that these expansions originate from high-level bureaucratic initiatives that anticipate principal priorities rather than direct state directives.

The paper provides a dynamic account of IO scope expansion that connects the principal-control and bureaucratic autonomy approach to IOs. Existing studies of international organizations emphasize two perspectives. One strand highlights principal control, portraying IOs as passive instruments through which powerful states shape outcomes (Hawkins et al., 2006; Stone, 2011; Copelovitch, 2010; Dreher et al., 2009; Dreher and Sturm, 2012). A second strand emphasizes bureaucratic autonomy, showing how IO officials exercise discretion, follow internal norms, and pursue their independent interests (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999; Weaver, 2008; Johnson, 2014; Clark and Zucker, 2022). Principal-control accounts predict adaptation only following explicit state directives, while autonomy-based accounts expect IOs to expand in line with internal norms or technical preferences. I show that bureaucratic autonomy drives IO scope expansion, but in the direction that aligns with the shifting priorities of the major principal. The shadow of the principal's preferences incentivizes IOs to chase their priorities. Bureaucratic autonomy does not merely shape how IOs implement assigned responsibilities (Clark and Dolan, 2021), but also fundamentally reshapes IO functions by altering their organizational scope.

This perspective explains how IO bureaucracies shape the changing global governance agenda under state influence. Recent work has shown how bureaucrats operate alongside state power in shaping IO behavior (Clark and Zucker, 2022; Carnegie et al., 2024). Building on this shared insight, I extend the analysis beyond individual cases to explain why bureaucratic scope expansion varies so widely across organizations, issues, and time. I show that IO scope expansion is systematic, selective, and power-structured, occurring primarily in domains valued by the major principal. This interaction between IO bureaucracies and their major principal forms a crucial mechanism of agenda-setting in global governance (Frieden, 2016).

More broadly, this paper speaks to how power operates through institutions rather than only through formal rules or direct intervention. It shows that shifts in the priorities of powerful actors

can reshape institutional agendas indirectly, by altering the incentives of bureaucracies implementing policies. This perspective contributes to broader debates in political science on agenda-setting, delegation, and institutional change (Moe, 1984; Carpenter, 2002; Wilson, 1989).

Rather than creating new bodies, high-level officials redirect staff tasking, cultivate new expertise, and reorient their current organizations around emerging issues. Beyond the life-death dichotomy or becoming zombies (Gray, 2018), institutions can gradually change their functions (Streeck et al., 2009). Johnson (2014) shows how IOs create "progeny" to expand their influence, and Abbott et al. (2016) suggests this may be the only way for IOs to respond to challenges given their limited flexibility. Lall (2023) highlights how bureaucracies adjust performance under principal oversight. I show that scope expansion inside existing IOs is itself a form of entrepreneurship. Through changes in personnel and daily operations, bureaucracies redefine what their organizations do in practice.

This study identifies staff tasking as an important determinant of institutional function. Beyond formal rules or budgetary control, the selection of agents itself constitutes a critical mechanism of influence through which powerful states can reshape the organization from within. Who an organization hires and what tasks those staff are assigned determine both the expertise embedded within the organization and how that expertise is deployed in routine operations. Job postings provide an ideal lens for observing this process, offering three key advantages: *completeness* (capturing the full spectrum of IO activities), *unbiased* (drafted for recruitment rather than political signaling), and *comparability* (following similar templates across IOs enables systematic cross-organizational analysis). By building and analyzing an original dataset of IO job postings, this study introduces a novel empirical approach to understanding how international organizations operate and how their scope evolves over time.

2 Bureaucratic Incentives, Power, and Scope Expansion of IOs

2.1 The IO Bureaucracy's Proactive Expansion

Traditional theories of international organizations emphasize that states design institutions to address specific cooperation problems and delegate tasks accordingly (Keohane, 1984; Koremenos et al., 2001; Koremenos, 2016). Studies therefore often treat the set of tasks an IO performs as given and analyze IO performance in this context (Downs et al., 1996; Chayes and Chayes, 1998). For example, trade institutions by their effects on trade, financial institutions by stabilization outcomes, or security organizations by conflict management (Goldstein et al., 2007; Lipscy and Lee, 2019; Glaser, 1993).

Yet in practice, we observe IOs frequently operate well beyond their core mandates, and the content of their activities varies substantially across organizations and over time. Although each IO is founded with a core issue area, there is considerable variation in which issues they emphasize in their daily operations. The IMF illustrates this puzzle. One might argue that agriculture, health, and education all influence macroeconomic stability and therefore fall within the Fund's scope. But as an Australian Treasury paper observed, "The challenge is knowing when to stop, since virtually every aspect of an economy can be said to be macro-economically relevant." The real question, then, is not whether issues can be connected to an organization's mandate, but why some issues are operationalized while others are not, and why these patterns differ across organizations and over time. One could argue that all issues are cross-cutting and therefore everything can be "finance" for a financial IO. However, this also implies a changing definition of "finance" itself. As a former senior leader at the IMF puts it, "The mandate of the IMF has not changed; what has been constantly changing is the application of these principles and what has been defined as macro-critical."[2]

Many IOs now address issues outside their core domains. The IMF launched the Resilience and Sustainability Trust to support financing for climate and health challenges and has expanded

[2]Interview 13. According to the context, "macro-critical" refers to what factors are crucial to macroeconomics.

its work on governance, social spending, and gender issues.[3] The World Health Organization increasingly frames climate change as a major health threat and calls for climate finance,[4] while the World Bank incorporates climate and gender goals across its operations.

Crucially, these expansions often originate within IO bureaucracies themselves rather than from direct state orders. The IMF provides a clear illustration. In 2025, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent warned that climate, gender, and social policy were crowding out the Fund's core macroeconomic tasks, stating that "we must make the IMF the IMF again."[5] Even during the Biden administration, which supported multilateral cooperation on climate, US officials publicly criticized the Fund for "mission creep." In 2023, Under Secretary Jay Shambaugh urged the IMF to "focus on macroeconomic issues," arguing that "the IMF should not be experts on climate issues."[6]

These episodes do not indicate that bureaucratic expansion is unstructured or independent of state power. Rather, they show that scope expansion is a bureaucratic initiative without explicit state authorization and may exceed what principals ultimately tolerate. Pushback and accusations of mission creep from major principal states mark the outer boundary of acceptable expansion. This is reasonable since states have a wide range of governance channels to choose from, and they want to optimize the division of labor and overall outcome, rather than having all IOs crowd into the same space.[7]

Pure principal-control accounts of IOs struggle to explain this pattern. If IOs simply implemented state instructions, bureaucracies would have little incentive to initiate work outside estab-

[3]The Chair's Summing Up Independent Evaluation Office - The Evolving Application of the IMF's Mandate, Executive Board Meeting, June 10, 2024, IMF, retrieved from https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2024/06/17/The-Chairs-Summing-Up-Independent-Evaluation-Office-The-Evolving-Application-of-the-IMFs-550573.

[4]"We must fight one of the worlds biggest health threats: climate change." World Health Organization, November 3, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/we-must-fight-one-of-the-world-s-biggest-health-threats-climate-change.

[5]"Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent Remarks before the Institute of International Finance," U.S. Department of the Treasury, April 23, 2025, retrieved from https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0094.

[6]"Remarks at the Center for Global Development on the IMF and Support for Developing Countries," U.S. Department of the Treasury, September 7, 2023, retrieved from https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1715.

[7]Of course, bureaucratic initiative is not the sole reason for expansion. States can reform IOs directly if they want, see Haftel and Hofmann (2019).

lished mandates, and organizational scope would change only following direct orders or formal redesign. Bureaucratic inertia and path dependence would further discourage proactive scope expansion. However, elite interviews indicate that initiatives frequently originate with senior bureaucrats, particularly in leadership, strategy, fundraising, and external relations offices. These bureaucrats adjust staffing, expertise, and tasking to reposition their organizations in areas where they perceive the major principal to prioritize. They do so not because they independently evaluate which global problems matter, but because their organizations' access to resources, attention, and recognition depends on following evolving principal priorities.[8]

Sociological and organizational approaches, by contrast, emphasize bureaucratic worldviews and internal norms. If these factors alone drove expansion, scope change should closely track the visibility of challenges to bureaucrats or their technical preferences. Yet IOs with similar mandates often display sharply different operational scopes. Autonomy can also lead to the creation of organizational progeny or linked institutions to address new issues (Johnson, 2014; Lugg, 2024). However, IOs also take on new issues within existing organizations. Consistent with this logic, interviews with IO staff suggest that changes in organizational scope are often driven by senior managers' initiatives. Sustained shifts in operational scope typically reflect decisions by leadership concerned with organizational resources and relevance under principal oversight.[9]

2.2 Bureaucratic Initiative and the Politics of Scope Expansion

I propose a principal-agent logic to explain why IO bureaucrats proactively expand their operational scope. Bureaucrats care about both their own professional trajectories and the organizational conditions that make those trajectories possible.

IO bureaucrats have two sets of incentives: material interests and professional fulfillment. Clas-

[8]Dates and interviewee information are listed in Table B1. Interviewees also noted that senior officials push the boundaries while states are often warning them not to expand too far. For example, interviews 2 and 9 mentioned that the United States consistently warned the ILO against working on climate issues unrelated to labor. Interview 3 noted that when IMF leadership sought to engage in vaccine work, it encountered US pushback because the issue was viewed as too distant from the organization's expertise and mandate.

[9]Interviews 9 and 12.

sic work on bureaucracy emphasizes that organizational survival is a central material concern, and agencies shape their behavior to avoid resource cuts or abolition (Moe, 1984). Bureaucracies seek growth in budgets and staffing because these translate into organizational security and individual opportunity (Niskanen, 1971). Research on domestic bureaucracies further shows that agencies operate in competitive environments and regularly engage in "turf wars" over jurisdiction, resources, and visibility (Wilson, 1989). In IOs, studies have shown that bureaucrats care about material benefits derived from the job (Gray, 2018; Clark and Dolan, 2021; Johnson, 2016). Job security and career advancement depend on whether their organizations maintain budgets, staff positions, and a stable organizational future. Further, this depends on whether the organization is valued by the major principal and continues to thrive.

Professional fulfillment captures a different aspect of bureaucratic motivation. Bureaucrats care about the job itself (Wilson, 1989; Carpenter, 2002; Johnson, 2016). They value the opportunity to participate in substantial initiatives, projects, and policy-making processes, and to participate in consequential rather than marginal work. Therefore, bureaucrats care about whether their organization is positioned to do substantive work and to sustain careers within it. This then depends on whether the organization can sustain resources and recognition from the major principal state.

Therefore, both sets of incentives hinge on a common organizational condition: whether an IO receives sustained attention, recognition, and resources from its major principal. Attention and recognition affect whether an IO is treated as a relevant and legitimate venue for addressing an issue, while resources are the material support that enables organizational capacity. IO bureaucracies operate in a crowded governance marketplace in which states can pursue cooperation through multiple venues, including alternative IOs, informal platforms, or bilateral channels. In this environment, IOs are incentivized to expand the scope and complexity of their activities to signal effectiveness, support organizational growth, and attract political, social, and material resources (Abbott et al., 2016). Bureaucrats therefore have strong incentives to ensure that their organization continues to be treated as a meaningful venue by major the principal.[10]

[10]A similar logic exists in firms, where employees care about the firms performance (Lee and Liou, 2022).

Scope expansion toward domains prioritized by the major principal therefore becomes a strategy to secure organizational importance to the principal and to sustain the conditions that support both material interests and professional fulfillment of bureaucrats. Classic work in finance and management describes how firm managers make specific investments that increase their importance to shareholders (Shleifer and Vishny, 1989). A parallel logic applies in state-IO relations. When the major principal directs attention and resources toward certain issues, the bureaucracy faces pressure to reposition its activities toward those areas.

The key instrument for such repositioning is staff composition and tasking. Even without formal mandate change, senior bureaucrats can alter staff expertise and daily work to address new issue areas, effectively reshaping what the organization does in practice. Organizational scope is operationalized by what it makes the personnel do routinely, which is reflected by tasks. Research in labor economics emphasizes that skills are embodied in bundles of tasks and that changes in tasks reveal shifts in organizational production (Autor et al., 2003; Acemoglu and Autor, 2011). In this view, shifting staff tasking constitutes a real change in the organization's operational profile even if its formal mandate is unchanged.

This logic also aligns with principal-agent theories of delegation, which emphasize that expertise and capacity are central to what agents can credibly do and what principals are willing to rely on them for (Huber and Shipan, 2002; Epstein and O'halloran, 1994). When senior managers expand hiring and tasking in a new domain, they increase the organization's ability to supply valued services, thereby strengthening the case that the IO is a consequential venue for that issue. Thus, shifting staff expertise and daily tasks provides a mechanism through which bureaucracies can expand or redirect operational scope in ways that track major principal priorities.

Elite interviews confirm this mechanism in how senior officials describe their own work. A former senior official in the IMF leadership explained that the organization expands into areas such as climate and health because they "always need to be relevant." The management looks outward and "tries to be the head of the turf," addressing issues important to their shareholders.[11]

[11] Interviews 3. The IMF expands into climate and health issues because "*(high-level official in the IMF leadership) always needs to be a relevant person.*"

At the International Labour Organization (ILO), senior officers described climate initiatives, as opposed to labor issues, as the "future" that would sustain organizational vitality.[12] At the World Bank,[13] while lower level staff has some freedom in exploring what they are interested in, the management level filter these proposals through the lens of principal priorities and then lobby for support.[14] Conversely, issues not backed by the major principal state, for example, private sector lending at the Caribbean Development Bank, struggle to gain support even when staff and many member states favor them.[15] This highlights that scope expansion is concentrated at the high-level IO bureaucracy, where bureaucrats interact with major principals, anticipate where their attention is moving, and adjust organizational scope to remain aligned with their evolving priorities.

The same dynamic is evident in organizational changes. The IMF's trajectory in the 2000s illustrates the mechanism, when global lending demand fell and the organization risked irrelevance. The former French finance minister described it as an institution that "works well, with dedicated people and very high-level staff, but it is a factory to produce paper."[16] The former managing director Strauss-Kahn then emphasized the need to "keep the IMF relevant" when traditional clients no longer needed its core services.[17] In response, senior officials pushed work on trade and oil, and later climate and health, which are all areas that resonated with major shareholder concerns.[18] Similarly, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) shifted its focus to health during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing health services and delivering vaccines as shareholder attention shifted from infrastructure to public health (Zaccaria, 2024). President Jin Liqun explained this

[12]The senior leader of the department is enthusiastic about climate issues because "*that is where the future lies, not these labor issues,*" and "*we must think about the future of the ILO.*" (interview 2)

[13]Interview 12.

[14]In this process, there may be variation among IOs. In some IOs, principal states may have more oversight while bureaucracies have greater autonomy in others. Medium to low-level staff may play a role in reporting issues and conducting research, and interviewees from lower levels and operational positions are less likely to feel the political pressure (interviews 7, 8).

[15]For example, one former senior staff at the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) mentions that many member states, as well as the bureaucracy, were interested in adding projects related to the private sector. However, Canada was not interested in the issue, and it was very difficult to get it on the agenda. Meanwhile, Canada prioritized gender issues, so that CDB has increasingly worked on gender.

[16]"IMF Plans to Cut Jobs, Lift Income, The Wall Street Journal," Dec 7 2007, retrieved from `https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB119697366200516166`.

[17]IMF Plans to Cut Jobs, Lift Income, The Wall Street Journal, Dec 7 2007.

[18]IMF senior officials described Iraq, Lebanon, and Gaza as "the Argentinas and Brazils of today."

shift to align with major shareholder priorities.[19]

When a new issue arises on principal agendas, IO bureaucracies often have incentives to incorporate it into their routine operations. Although they cannot directly change formal mandates, they can embed relevant expertise within the organization, assign staff to new tasks, and reallocate personnel toward the emerging issue. Through these staffing and tasking decisions, IOs integrate new domains into their operations, reshape what the organization does in practice, and build a new organizational profile. The Asian Development Bank, for example, brands itself as the "Asia and the Pacific's Climate Bank."As strategy director Tomoyuki Kimura put it: "We want to be the climate change bank in the region."[20] Of course, IOs could engage with adjacent issues in more limited ways: by deferring to specialized organizations (Pratt, 2018), creating new bodies (Johnson, 2014; Lugg, 2024), linking new topics to existing mandates (Davis, 2004), or outsourcing. Yet it is difficult for these strategies to generate the same attention, resources, and recognition from the major principal.

This implies that bureaucratic scope change is shaped by two necessary conditions. First, global challenges create openings for organizational repositioning. They create demand for activity even when formal mandates do not change. Second, the major principal's priorities determine which openings are politically and organizationally valuable. States value organizations that help advance important objectives, provide usable expertise, and serve as effective venues for coordination and influence (Keohane, 1984; Stone, 2011). At the same time, principal states shape the IO's rules, membership, rules, leadership, and resources (Keohane, 1984; Davis, 2023; Ikenberry, 1996). Existing studies have shown that such influence is uneven, with a small number of major principal states carrying particular weight (Stone, 2011; Copelovitch, 2010). Without the major principal elevating an issue as a priority, expansions are unlikely to attract sustained attention or

[19]Jin Liqun: "Covid helped our shareholders to understand that when we develop infrastructure for tomorrow, we should not neglect healthcare systems." See "AIIB swivels to climate and private-sector financing ahead of COP26," Euromoney, 26 October 2021, retrieved from https://www.euromoney.com/article/298jhh0zz4wk1bw2h375s/esg/aiib-swivels-to-climate-and-private-sector-financing-ahead-of-cop26.

[20]"ADB to devote half its lending to climate finance by 2030," Reuters, 6 September 2024, retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/sustainable-finance-reporting/adb-devote-half-its-lending-climate-finance-by-2030-2024-09-06/.

support. Of course, there can be multiple major principals and their power can vary across IOs. For simplicity, I consider one major principal in an IO but examine variation in the relative strength of it. Future research could more fully investigate how different power structures and decision rules condition bureaucratic adaptation.

Because the IO expands into issues that the major principal prioritizes, the principal often tolerates or even welcomes such expansions when they occur in IOs it dominates. Such expansions provide convenient channels for pursuing preferred outcomes since this is where its leverage is strongest. Once bureaucracies establish capacity in a new area, states may find it efficient to continue using them, lowering the cost of future cooperation. For example, Japan has a significant influence over the Asian Development Bank and has substantially shaped its development policies (Wan, 1995; Lim and Vreeland, 2013; Kilby, 2011). When it comes to climate change, the ADB also provides a channel for Japan to cooperate with other countries in the region in its preferred way. The Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM), which the Japanese government integrated into the ADB, supports projects that deploy advanced low-carbon technologies. Japan's other ministries also work closely with the ADB on climate policies. In contrast, Japan may find it difficult to promote such policies through other IOs like the World Bank.

Yet bureaucratic incentives to attract attention, recognition, and resources from the major principal state do not necessarily align with the latter's concerns about efficiency or technical specialization. Bureaucracies may expand in directions that reflect major principal priorities, but more aggressively than principals prefer. This is because bureaucrats focus on sustaining organizational attention and resources rather than optimizing the overall division of labor across institutions. For example, the Independent Evaluation Office required the IMF to undergo a scope evaluation in 2024, following sustained US warnings about its drift from its core mandate. Although systematic evidence on these limits lies beyond the scope of this study, episodes of criticism, often labeled "mission creep," are consistent with this logic.

Based on the arguments above, I propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Following global challenges, when the major principal prioritizes the

issue, IO bureaucracies expand their operational scope to address them.

In contrast,

> **Hypothesis 1b**: Following global challenges, when the major principal do not prioritize the issue, IO bureaucracies do not expand to address the issue.

Finally, when a global challenge has already become salient, changes in principal priority will directly affect the scope of an IO:

> **Hypothesis 2**: Given an existing global challenge, when the major principal shifts attention away from an issue, the IO will contract from the issue area.

3 Descriptive Patterns: The Scope of IOs Over Time

The operational scope of IOs stems from what their bureaucrats actually do. Bureaucrats translate broad mandates into concrete actions, deciding which problems receive attention, what forms of expertise they mobilize, and how to deploy resources. Staff expertise and tasking therefore constitutes a crucial factor in institutional functioning. It determines how an IO's formal purpose is realized in practice and where its organizational capacity expands or contracts.

To examine how IOs adapt to global challenges, I develop a new measure of operational scope. Studies typically capture what states formally authorize IOs to do, but not how bureaucracies allocate internal capacity across issue areas. This distinction is central to the argument of this paper. IO bureaucrats make operational decisions that redefine which kinds of expertise the organization employs and what work staff are expected to carry out in its routine activities. By measuring staff expertise and tasking, I capture how bureaucratic initiative reshapes IO scope in practice.

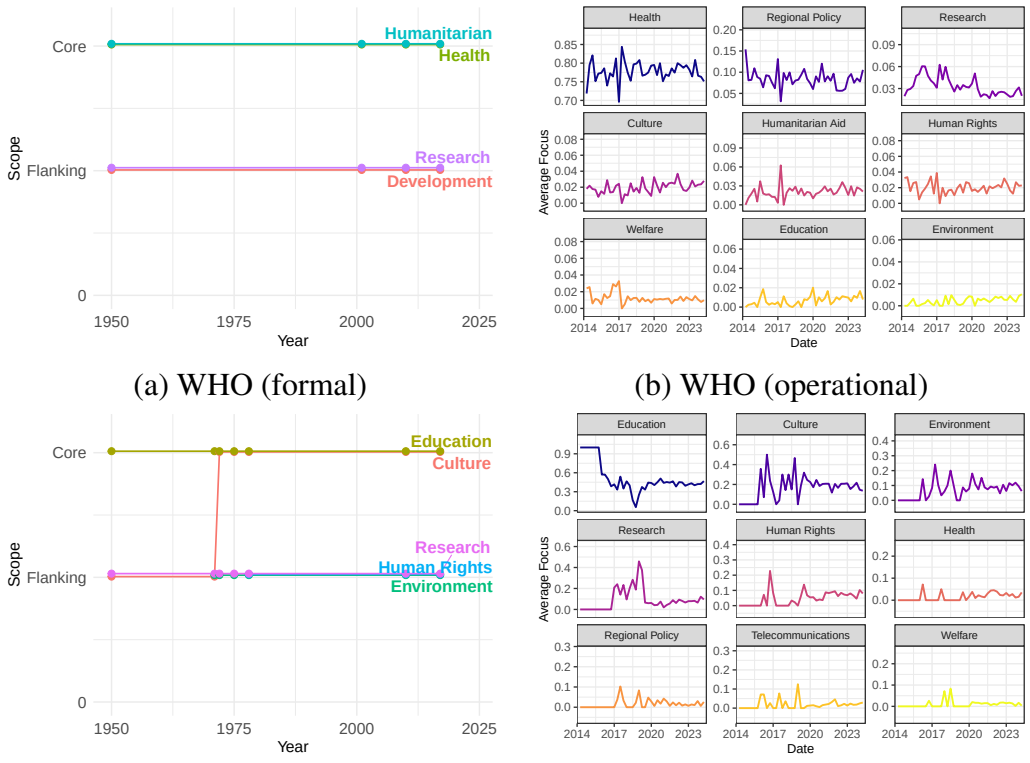
Most existing studies classify IOs according to their formal design. For example, they categorize the World Health Organization as a "health IO," the World Bank as a "development IO," and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as a "security IO." The most comprehensive effort, the Measuring International Authority (MIA) project (Hooghe, 2017; Hooghe et al., 2019), codes

the formal policy scope of 76 IOs based on institutionalized policies such as treaties, protocols, declarations, and constitutions. Figures 1(a) and 1(c) plot the MIA scope scores for the WHO and UNESCO. According to these formal measures, both organizations' policy domains remain nearly constant over decades, and they code issues that states did not formally assign as outside the organizational scope.

However, these formal classifications obscure substantial variation in what IOs actually do. In practice, the WHO actively advocates for climate financing, and UNESCO conducts extensive work in health and telecommunications. While such measures are valuable for analyzing institutional design, they capture formal authority rather than bureaucratic action. They describe what states have mandate IOs to do, but not how bureaucracies allocate expertise and tasking across issue areas in their daily operations. Yet questions of bureaucratic adaptation require measures that capture these organizational decisions.

Figures 1(b) and (d) illustrate the operational scope of the WHO and UNESCO across their principal issue areas, revealing a broader and more dynamic pattern of activity even in the recent decade. One notable pattern is UNESCO's declining operational focus on education. Observers have documented this shift anecdotally.[21] However, if we focus on UNESCO's formal mandate, as shown in Figure 1(c), its focus on education has remained constant since its establishment. The divergence between formal scope and operational focus reflects the importance of staffing and expertise decisions. I discuss the construction of this measure in the next section.

[21] "Has UNESCO lost its way?" Devex, September 27 2019, retrieved from `https://www.devex.com/news/has-unesco-lost-its-way-95469`.



(a) WHO (formal)

(b) WHO (operational)

(c) UNESCO (formal)

(d) UNESCO (operational)

Figure 1: Comparison of Formal vs Operational Scope of Example IOs

Note: The left-side figures plot the scope of WHO and UNESCO coded by the MIA project. The right-side figures are the corresponding operational focus of the two IOs, measured by job postings data in this study. The x-axis is time, and the y-axis is the IO's scope in each issue area (formal: not an issue, flanking issue area, core issue area; operational: average focus on an issue in job postings each quarter).

3.1 Constructing the IO Job Postings Data

To capture bureaucratic adaptation through staff tasking, I compile an original dataset of 630,500 job postings from 234 intergovernmental organizations between 2007 and 2024. Job postings specify the tasks and responsibilities that staff are expected to carry out, as well as the expertise required to perform them. Together, these postings reveal how IOs allocate staff effort and institutionalize particular forms of expertise across issue areas. Because operational scope is realized through sustained task assignments and expertise allocation, job postings provide a direct window into how bureaucracies expand or contract their activities over time.

Job postings are generated by departmental leadership and senior managers and reflect deliberate organizational decisions about what kinds of work warrant dedicated staff time and what

expertise should be embedded within the organization. By hiring staff with relevant expertise and assigning them to specific tasks, IOs embed those activities into routine operations and demonstrate their ability to contribute to new issue areas. As a result, job postings capture how bureaucracies translate emerging priorities into ongoing organizational practice.

Consider a 2024 job posting below by the ADB for a Natural Resources and Agriculture Economist.[22] The post instructed the officer to "support climate-smart agri-food system transformation" and "enhance climate resilience and adaptation." Tasks included developing loans and grants, leading policy dialogues, and coordinating regional cooperation. The job's required qualifications emphasized expertise in sustainability and environmental economics, areas distinct from ADB's original poverty reduction mandate. By assigning staff to these tasks and hiring corresponding expertise, the ADB incorporated climate-related activities into its routine operations.

Without job postings, much of this organizational function would be difficult to observe. The work of this economist may not be fully captured in formal publications of the ADB if some part of it is politically unpopular or does not yield tangible outcomes. Even if all the work listed here is captured in written publications, it is likely to be highly fragmented and documented in different forms. Some will appear in loan contracts and investment portfolios, and others in multilateral cooperation agreements and annual reports. Job postings provide a centralized and systematic record of these upstream decisions about what IOs do.

Multiple sources confirm the validity of this measure. Interviews with human resources (HR) officers emphasize that job postings must accurately describe duties to attract qualified candidates, as misrepresentation would result in costly mismatches. Unlike smaller labor markets, such as those for university faculty positions, IO recruitment operates in a much broader and more competitive market, making it particularly reliant on clear market signaling. In this context, incomplete or inaccurate job descriptions would significantly hinder the ability to reach suitable candidates. As noted earlier, a key advantage of job postings is their relative unbiasedness compared to other

[22]Natural Resources and Agriculture Economist, Asian Development Bank, April 10 2024, retrieved from `https://web.archive.org/web/20240419171036/https://www.adb.org/careers/240222`. Section E in the Appendix provides two additional example job postings from the ICAO and ILO.

Your Role:

As a Natural Resources and Agriculture Economist, you will assess and recommend operation strategies for agriculture, food, nature, and rural development in East and Southeast Asia and Pacific countries, engage developing member country (DMC) governments in policy dialogues and reforms, and conduct ADB operations to support climate-smart agri-food system transformation, and enhance climate resilience and adaptation. You will lead and/or support in identifying and developing loans, grants, technical assistances (TAs), and knowledge products, and provide technical support and backstopping to other staff. You will also administer loan, grant and TA projects, and non-lending products and services. This role will also contribute to the analyses and formulation of policies, strategies, and technical guidelines for the AFNR sector of DMCs.

You will:

- Lead and/or support the development of national, subregional and regional sustainable development and management of AFNR sector in DMCs in consultation with relevant government agencies, ADB RMs, and development partners.
- Lead and/or support the analyses of country economics and AFNR policies in selected DMCs and contributes to the AFNR sector assessment and business development including policy-based loans.
- Lead and/or support in the development, processing, and administration of loan, grant and TA projects, and ensure key technical, economic, financial, and crosscutting issues are incorporated into projects, including project economic and financial analyses and cost estimates.
- Lead and conduct economic and sector work in AFNR in the context of inclusive, gender-sensitive and environmentally sustainable economic growth.
- Identify and promote evidence-based policymaking and results-oriented investments towards sustainable and resilient agri-food systems in DMCs.
- Contributes to regional cooperation and integration for sustainable agriculture and food security.
- Liaise with development agencies and partners on collaborative sector, policy, and knowledge works and co-financing.
- ...

Qualifications:

- Master's degree or equivalent, in Environment, Sustainable Development, Finance, Economics or related fields; or University degree in Environment, Sustainable Development, Finance, Economics with additional relevant professional experience can be considered.
- Minimum of 8 years of relevant professional experience with strong policy focus including the below elements.
- Direct experience in originating and structuring infrastructure projects or PPP transactions.
- ...

IO outputs, as they are directed at job candidates rather than states. Consequently, IOs have fewer incentives to use job postings for window-dressing or symbolic signaling. After staff members are hired, HR officers note that internal rules bind staff tasks to ensure they reflect the descriptions in

the postings. Staff members themselves report that their day-to-day activities closely align with posted responsibilities, and several noted that postings often reveal emerging or politically sensitive work not visible in official reports.[23] The production process of job postings further reflects bureaucratic agency. Job postings reflect operational needs, and their content is written primarily by departmental leadership. Member states typically approve the larger budget and annual hiring headcounts, but there is little attention or interference from states in the actual job design and hiring process because of its technical nature.[24] As a result, job postings reflect internal bureaucratic decisions about how to develop and deploy organizational resources across issue areas.

I collect job postings from official IO job sites, third-party recruitment platforms, official IO Twitter and LinkedIn accounts, and others.[25] Coverage extends the 73 IOs in the MIA project to 234 organizations that the Yearbook of International Organizations lists.[26] I match IO names across different sources and remove duplicate postings. The data collection process covers as many IOs that actively recruit staff to operate as possible, thereby covering the target population of IOs that this study is concerned with, which are those that have a reasonably sized bureaucracy and are actively engaged in program implementation and service delivery.[27] For subsequent analysis, I also test its robustness to potential missing data.[28]

Each posting includes the date and full text describing tasks, responsibilities, and qualifications.[29] I show that job postings respond rapidly to known major world events, so that IO job postings reflect immediate changes in IO behavior.[30]

[23]Interviews 2-13.

[24]The top organizational leadership hiring may be an exception.

[25]This crowd-sourcing approach is the common practice for job postings data used by labor economists. I summarize the data collection details and the number of job postings over time in Table A1 and Figure A1 in the Appendix.

[26]The dataset includes 52 of the 73 IOs still active in the MIA project. An organization is considered an IO if it is listed independently in the Yearbook as an intergovernmental organization. For the UN system, all departments are aggregated under "United Nations" unless they are specialized agencies or funds (e.g., IMF, UNESCO).

[27]The complete list of IOs covered in this paper is in Section A in the Appendix. Table A8 lists the top 30 IOs accounting for the most job postings. IOs that the dataset does not cover are likely those that are close to treaties or platforms and only keep a handful of staff. For example, the job postings data does not include the Benelux Union, an organization with only 49 staff members based on the Treaty of Union by Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

[28]I confirm the robustness of the analysis to potential missing data and the presence of many European IOs by removing 5% of the European IO job postings. The results are shown in Appendix Figure D4.

[29]I remove preambles shared across most posts in an IO because they contain little information about the job.

[30]See Figure C5 in the Appendix. After the Russian invasion and the Taliban took over Afghanistan, there was an immediate surge in related mentions in IO job postings.

3.2 Identifying the Scope of International Organizations

To identify the operational scope of international organizations, I classify the issue area associated with each job. I fine-tune a pre-trained transformer language model, RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019), using a training set with 3,106 postings that I hand-coded.[31] By fine-tuning with hand-coded data, I adapt the model to recognize the specific kinds of language that indicate the issue areas an IO job belongs to. This approach ensures that the classification reflects the actual work described in the job rather than superficial mentions. For instance, it helps the model distinguish between a role centered on delivering social welfare programs and a job posting that merely mentions IO employee benefits; between substantive climate work and a generic reference to "sustainable development"; and between policy work on data safety and routine administrative IT tasks. This precision is crucial for measuring IO scope expansion. Each posting can belong to multiple topics among 27 categories (each job may involve tasks spanning several issue areas), including the 25 from MIA plus "Artificial Intelligence" and "Administrative Support."[32]

Overall, the models perform well according to conventional standards. The model's overall accuracy on the test set is 0.95, and the average precision, recall, and F-1 score are all over 0.95. 25 out of 27 topics have an F1-score over 0.9.[33]

After obtaining the fine-tuned model, I use it to classify all job postings. The model identifies whether a job posting is within each issue area or not. Again, each job post can belong to multiple issue areas. Within each post, I calculate the proportion of focus the staff has on each issue area. For example, if a job post focuses on three topics: Agriculture, Development, and Trade, the focus of this staff in each issue area will be $1/3$. Then, I average the focus on each issue area within

[31] RoBERTa is a state-of-the-art language model that has already learned general patterns of English from a very large text collection.

[32] The 25 MIA topics are: (1) Development and poverty reduction, (2) Environment and climate, (3) Regional policy, (4) Social and welfare system, (5) Education, (6) Agriculture, (7) Health, (8) Culture and Media, (9) Justice and security, (10) Research policy, (11) Migration and immigration, (12) Human rights, (13) Transportation, (14) Foreign policy, (15) Commercial Competition regulation, (16) Fisheries and maritime, (17) Industrial policy, (18) Energy, (19) Taxation and macroeconomic policy, (20) Telecommunication, (21) Humanitarian aid, (22) Trade and tariffs, (23) Financial stabilization, (24) Financial regulation, and (25) Military and defense.

[33] Table C1 in the Appendix shows the performance of my fine-tuned model on the test set. I partition the hand-coded dataset into training and test sets using an 80-20 split. All F-1 scores are higher than or equal to 0.84, which is far above the 0.7 conventional threshold.

an organization over a time window and obtain the proportion of job focus on a topic for each IO.[34] Within any time window, the sum of an IO's focus on all issues will be 1. This measure is easy to interpret. For instance, an IO scoring 0.18 in Transportation during time t means that an average staff has an 18% focus on transportation or that 18% of its staff focuses exclusively on transportation issues during this period. I analyze topic proportions rather than absolute posting counts, since raw volumes are sensitive to recruitment cycles and contain greater noise. Hence, this study focuses on shifts in the IO's relative issue emphasis. However, the average total staff growth rate in IOs is approximately 3%, substantially lower than the expansion effect identified in specific issue areas.[35] This indicates that the expansion I identify is not simply an addition of new issues to the IO's function. It is at least partly a reallocation of attention and resources that contracts the IO's existing focus, which is reasonable in the short term when the IO's resources remain relatively stable. This is also confirmed by interviews.[36]

Since I use a new data source and a new measurement, I address several potential issues in the Appendix. First, I examine whether job postings data correspond to IO policy outputs, even though interviews with IO staff suggest that job postings provide a relatively objective account of organizational activities. I examine the correlation between the focus of job postings and two measures of IO policy, including original data on the labels of all IMF policy reports and policy acts from the Intergovernmental Policy Output Dataset (IPOD) (Lundgren et al., 2024). Overall, job postings and policy outputs exhibit some correlation. The IMF reports are better correlated with the focus of job postings, as they are more directly related to policy implementation. Correlation with IPOD is noisier, as the latter includes resolutions, declarations, and statements that do not necessarily require IO operations. Together, this suggests that job postings capture organizational priorities that shape outputs, while also providing distinct leverage on IO behavior.[37] Second, although job

[34] In each step, I remove the focus on pure administration tasks.

[35] I use the UN-CEB data to calculate the average staff growth rate across UN organizations, which yields an average of 2.99%. Asian Development Bank (2014-2023) has the same average growth rate. See `https://unsceb.org/hr-organization` and `https://www.adb.org/documents/adb-annual-report-2023`.

[36] "*These new climate economist hires are blocking the hiring pipeline, and we are no longer hiring traditional macroeconomists.*" (interview 3)

[37] Figure C1 and Figure C3 show the results.

postings only describe tasks of new staff members, they also reflect the entire organization's operational focus. This is because compared with many other professions, IO job contracts are relatively short-term,[38] allowing IO bureaucrats to adjust operational focus flexibly and makes the new hires closely approximate the full organizational profile.[39] Finally, although institutional rules limit staff to tasks listed in job descriptions, I consider the possibility of shifting relative focus within those responsibilities. Analysis of skill substitutability indicates this has only a minimal effect on the results.[40]

3.3 Pattern of Bureaucratic Adaptation Over Time

Figure 2 shows that the aggregate issue focus of IOs shifts markedly over time. Focus on environmental issues is increasing (with some disruption during the pandemic), while emphasis on traditional development issues like poverty reduction is declining.[41] The rise of artificial intelligence generates a rapid increase in IO tasking related to AI governance. These patterns illustrate the flexibility of global governance in practice: although the international regime complex remains relatively stable in terms of the active IOs and their formal mandates, IO bureaucracies reallocate staff expertise and tasking as global challenges emerge.[42]

The changing agenda of global governance reflects how individual IOs stretch beyond core mandates. Figure 3 shows the average scope of example IOs. The core mandate of each IO appears as its top issue area. The International Civil Aviation Organization focuses on transportation, the WTO concentrates on trade, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) deals with

[38]The short-term nature of IO jobs likely stems from its funding constraints and project-based work. Two articles discuss this issue: `https://www.ijmonitor.org/2021/03/ier-blog-series-in-search-of-staffing-flexibility-and-positive-working-conditions-at-the-icc`; `https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/newsletter/2024/05/01/inklings-uns-short-term-workforce-problem`.

[39]Using information on job post terms where it is available, I show that the change of scope in the entire organization is only slightly lagged compared to the job postings. The result is in Figure C2.

[40]We can infer skill substitutability from the coexistence of issue topics in observed job postings. See Figure C4. Since issue co-existence is not highly prevalent, especially for issue areas we focus on in the empirical section, shifting focus is unlikely to be prevalent.

[41]This is consistent with observations such as Ocampo and González (2024).

[42]Figure C6 in the Appendix presents time trends for all topics, confirming that the scope of IOs changes frequently over time.

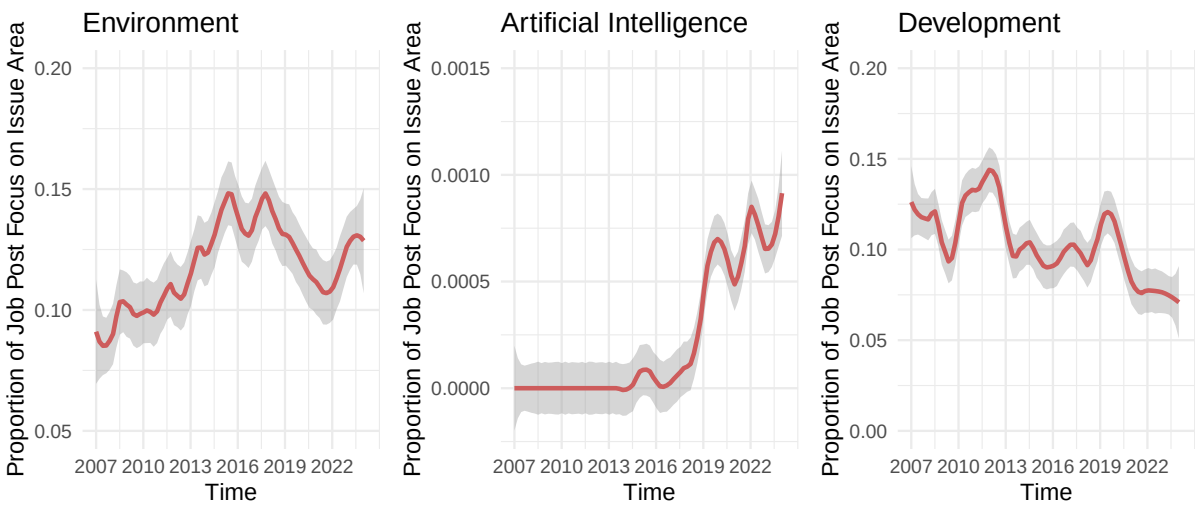


Figure 2: Aggregate IO Focus on Selected Issues Over Time

Note: Each panel plots the share of IO job postings devoted to an issue area (LOESS fit with 95% confidence intervals). A y-value of 0.1, for example, translates into all IOs' average job post having a 10% focus on an issue or 10% of the jobs being completely focused on an issue.

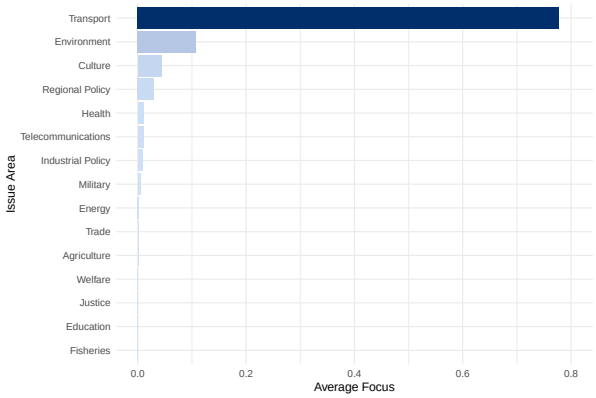
nuclear energy. The job postings data and classification successfully capture IOs' core functions.

At the same time, all six organizations allocate substantial staff tasking outside their core mandate. While the first three IOs remain more concentrated, the latter three display broader operational portfolios. The World Bank and the IMF have a significant focus on environmental issues, consistent with anecdotal evidence. Despite being a military organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also worked on human rights, justice, environment, and migration. Even for relatively focused IOs like the IAEA, only about 60% of staff tasking is about energy, its core mandate. 40% of its daily operations focus on other issues, such as health, environment, and agriculture. For example, the IAEA works on utilizing nuclear technologies to develop new seeds and promote climate-smart agriculture.[43] This pattern is not limited to closely related issue areas, but extends broadly across the IO landscape.[44]

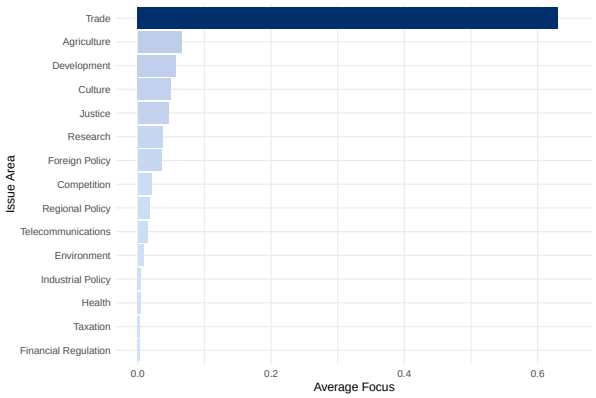
Figure 4 further shows how different an IO's focus can be across time. The ADB, for instance,

[43]See Food Security in Kenya: Growing More with Nuclear Techniques, 16 November 2022. Retrieved from `https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/multimedia/videos/food-security-in-kenya-growing-more-with-nuclear-techniques`.

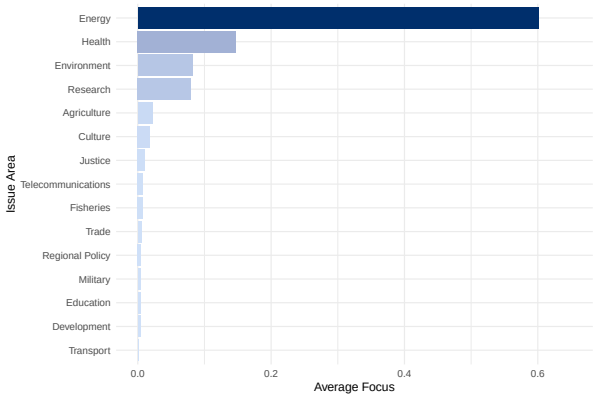
[44]See Figure C4.



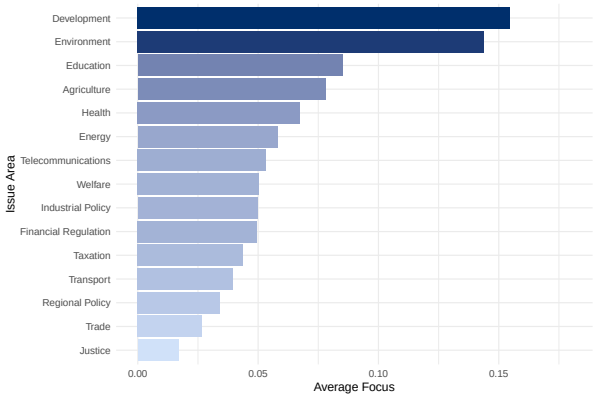
(a) International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)



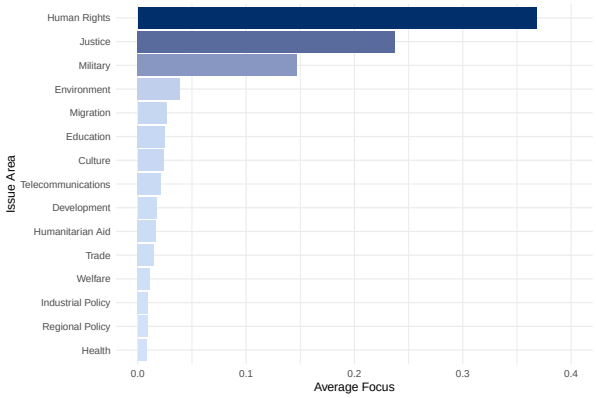
(b) World Trade Organization (WTO)



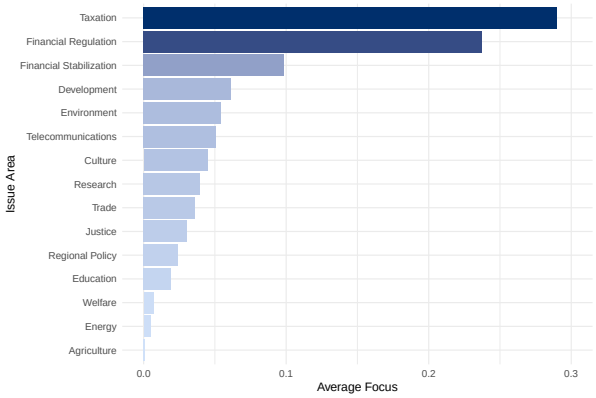
(c) International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)



(d) World Bank (WB)



(e) Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

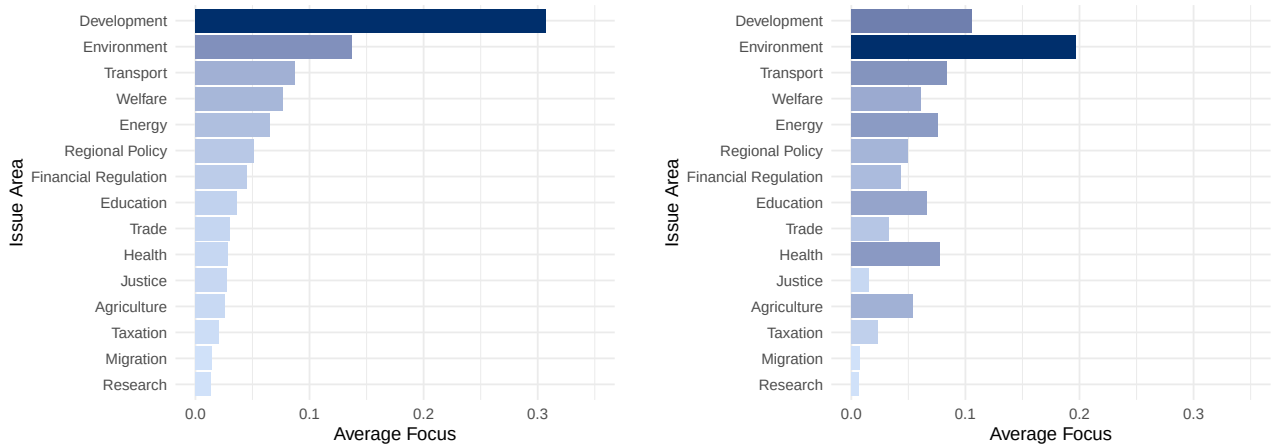


(f) International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Figure 3: Issue Focus of Six Example IOs

Note: In each figure, the x-axis is the estimated focus, and the y-axis represents issue areas with top-15 average focus for each IO from 2007 to 2024. A score of 0.1, for example, translates into the IO's average job post having a 10% focus on an issue or 10% of the jobs are completely focused on an issue.

has shifted its scope in recent years to prioritize climate change over development.



(a) 2007-2014 (b) 2015-2024

Figure 4: Asian Development Bank Issue Focus Over Time

Note: The figure shows the focus of the ADB. The x-axis is the estimated focus, and the y-axis is its issue areas with a top-15 average focus in 2007-2014.

Across IOs, this bureaucratic flexibility reshapes the composition of international regimes. Issues once governed by a few specialized IOs can later involve multiple bureaucracies: environmental governance includes development and financial institutions, and AI governance increasingly spans economic and cultural IOs. These expansions reflect bureaucratic adaptation to global challenges while also contributing to the fragmentation of governance across IOs. As the next section demonstrates, adaptation is selective: it occurs in IOs whose major principal prioritize the new issue. At the same time, IOs can vary in their capacity for such adaptation, depending on institutional design and the degree of bureaucratic discretion, which is an important direction for future research.

4 Rising Global Challenges and IO Scope Expansion

4.1 Research Design

International organizations regularly confront new global challenges, but their bureaucracies respond selectively. This section focuses how IOs responded to two prominent global challenges,

climate change and artificial intelligence, that rose sharply in salience during the period of analysis, and examines whether such adaptation depends on the priorities of the major principal state.

The November 2022 release of ChatGPT was an important moment that signaled the emergence of a global governance challenge, AI. The rapid diffusion of a widely accessible generative AI system transformed the issue from a largely anticipatory concern into an immediate and concrete governance problem. Governments responded unevenly to this shift. Some emphasized the need for international coordination and regulatory frameworks for AI governance, while others remained less interested. The ChatGPT release thus increased the salience of AI exogenously while showing variation in how major principals prioritized multilateral engagement. This provides a clean setting to observe whether and how IO bureaucracies adapt selectively in response to a newly salient global challenge.

The 2015 Paris climate process provides a complementary case. Climate change had long been recognized as a global challenge, but the Paris process sent a clear signal that many governments considered climate change a critical global challenge. Through diplomatic statements and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) speeches, governments publicly debated how to address climate change. For IOs, this period represented a turning point in which climate change governance became both more salient and more clearly differentiated across major principal states of different IOs. I use the period during which states negotiated and drafted the Paris Agreement and when the UNGA convened in September as the treatment time. During this time, IO bureaucracies observed heightened attention to climate issues and adjusted their activities in line with their principals' revealed priorities.

The AI case provides a particularly clean identification setting, as the release of ChatGPT constituted a sharp and temporally concentrated increase in the salience of AI governance, allowing for precise estimation and extensive robustness checks. I therefore treat AI as the primary empirical analysis. The climate case serves as a complementary test that examines whether the same logic operates in a substantively important domain where issue salience evolved through a longer and more politically negotiated process.

I use a difference-in-differences design to test the hypotheses. The focus is on how IOs' scope could expand to include the new challenge, so the analysis here includes only IOs that did not already have the challenge as part of their core scope. I distinguish three types of IOs for each global challenge (Table 1). For each shock, I identify a small group of IOs that are clearly distant from the affected issue area and thus unlikely to experience direct exposure to it. These IOs serve as the control group, allowing me to isolate general time trends in IO issue engagement that are unrelated to the specific emerging challenge.[45] When analyzing expansion into AI, for instance, the Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and 22 other IOs serve as controls. I demonstrate that the results are robust to using alternative control groups.

Among the treated IOs, I further distinguish those whose lead state prioritizes the new issue. Following Davis and Pratt (2021) and Davis (2023), I identify the lead state of each IO as the largest economic power (by GDP) in a given year. Theoretically, there can be multiple powerful principals in an IO (Copelovitch, 2010). In the empirical analysis, I further examine whether the strength of the effect varies with power asymmetry between the lead state and other members. Future research should look more closely into how different power structures within the IO affect scope expansion.

Table 1: Classification of IOs by Treatment Status

Group	**Definition**
Treated a (*high* principal priority)	IOs exposed to the new global challenge, and major principal displayed a large increase in attention
Treated b (*low* principal priority)	IOs exposed to the new global challenge, but major principal showed little or no increase in attention.
Control	IOs whose mandates are distant from the new global challenge.

The unit of analysis is the IO-quarter. The dependent variable Y_{kit} measures IO i's operational

[45] For example, when assessing the impact of artificial intelligence, IOs may change focus on digital-related activities for other reasons (e.g., traditional infrastructure building), independent of the ChatGPT release. The control group helps account for such background trends.

focus on issue k at time t, derived from job postings content. I estimate:

$$Y_{itk} = \alpha + \beta \cdot (\text{Treated}_i \times \text{Post-Global Challenge}_t) + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (1)$$

where Treated_i is an indicator of whether the IO is in the treatment group.
$\text{Post-Global Challenge}_t$ is an indicator of whether the IO-quarter observation is post-treatment. γ_i is IO fixed effects, and δ_t is quarter fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the IO level.[46] I test the parallel trends assumption by including pre-treatment periods. The results indicate that the assumption is generally satisfied across analyses.[47]

To capture principal priorities, I focus on shifts in attention as new challenges arise. The UNGA is a central forum in which states articulate and reveal their preferences in a multilateral setting. Prior research has shown that UNGA behavior, including voting, provides systematic information about states' underlying preferences and their evolution over time (Bailey et al., 2017). Speeches delivered in the General Debate complement this insight by capturing issue salience and prioritization, revealing which concerns states choose to emphasize publicly when addressing the international community (Baturo et al., 2017; Kentikelenis and Voeten, 2021). As new challenges emerge, increases in issue-specific references in UNGA speeches therefore measure whether an issue has become politically salient and valued. Accordingly, I measure whether the lead state increases its attention to an issue using changes in AI- and climate-related references in UNGA speeches following the treatment (Baturo et al., 2017).[48]

Although the language model outputs show high accuracy compared to hand-coding, the slight difference between the two can be problematic if the prediction error is non-random. If the prediction error is systematic, it could affect downstream hypothesis testing. Therefore, I use the design-based supervised learning (DSL) approach from Egami et al. (2024) to obtain valid estimates. All results shown in the main analysis are bias-corrected.

[46] All treated units are treated simultaneously.

[47] Figure D1 in the Appendix shows parallel trends.

[48] The climate-related keywords are "climate", "environment","environmental", "emission"; AI-related keywords are "artificial intelligence", "AI", "GPT", "chatgpt". Tables D2, D3, and D1 in the Appendix list the complete set of treated and control IOs.

4.2 Scope Expansion into Artificial Intelligence

Figure 5 shows how the ChatGPT launch in 2022 changed the focus of IOs whose mandates do not center around AI and telecommunications.[49] IOs with a major principal who have increased their attention to AI significantly increase focus on telecommunications and AI after the launch of ChatGPT.[50] The size of the effect is around a 23.7 percentage point increase in focus. The effect is consistently significant at the 95% level, and the power analysis indicates that the result remains consistent as the number of hand-coded data increases. For example, these IOs include the European Investment Bank, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, and the European Banking Authority, etc..[51] IOs with and without AI-concerned major principal are relatively similar in their type, so the latter cannot account for their differential reaction.[52] The findings are also robust to the use of alternative control groups and model specifications.[53]

Among IOs whose major principal prioritizes AI, we expect the effect to be stronger when power is more concentrated in that principal. For each IO, I calculate a dominance ratio for the major principal, which is the proportion of its GDP relative to the average GDP of other member states.[54] Following prior research showing that IO authority is often already concentrated within a small group of powerful members (Copelovitch, 2010), I measure dominance both within a lead

[49] I analyze the effect on the total focus on Telecommunications and AI here. This is because, although AI is classified by the language model, there are not many positive cases so far. Given that this is a new issue, states may be responding by increasing regulations on telecommunications more broadly, without explicitly referring to AI.

[50] For AI, the U.S., China, and Indonesia are exceptions and treated as countries that do not elevate interest in AI global governance. The U.S.'s speech mentioned AI, but it was widely accepted that U.S. AI governance has emphasized decentralized regulation and private-sector participation while placing limited priority on multilateral governance. Oversight was fragmented across federal agencies, and industry actors play a central role through consultations, voluntary standards, and self-regulatory initiatives (Feijóo et al., 2020; Luna et al., 2024; Mokry and Gurol, 2024; Olugbade, 2025). China and Indonesia mentioned AI, but their mentions were not about general multilateral cooperation. China accepted governance only through the UN, while Indonesia emphasized redistribution to developing nations.

[51] In fact, the EU formally cooperates on AI governance through the European Commission (EC)'s AI Office. However, removing the EC from the analysis does not change the results. Therefore, expansion into telecommunications and AI cannot be attributed solely to state orders.

[52] See Figure D5. IOs with concerned major principal include slightly more emanated IOs. However, emanated IOs without concerned major principal also do not show any significant effect (see Figure D6).

[53] Randomly removing some control IOs does not change the result, see Figure D7. Findings also remain consistent when using an interrupted time series design without control groups, see Table D4.

[54] Ideally, we would also consider the decision-making rule of IOs. For instance, IOs that require consensus may be less likely to expand compared to those with weighted voting rules. However, the number of IOs in each group after classification is too small to support meaningful statistical analysis.

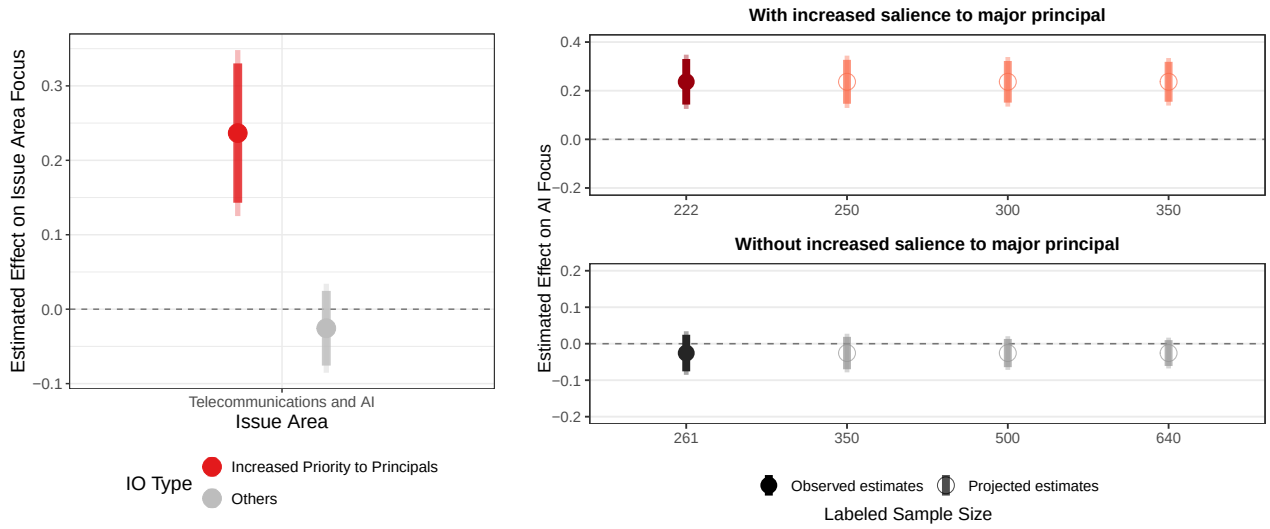


Figure 5: Bureaucratic Expansion into AI in Non-AI IOs

Note: The figure plots changes in non-AI IOs' AI and telecommunications focus following the ChatGPT release, relative to the control IOs. The left-hand-side figure shows the raw estimates, and the right-hand-side figure shows power analysis assuming additional hand-coded data. Points represent average treatment effects with 90% (thick) and 95% (thin) confidence intervals. In the right-hand-side figure, estimates on the left (solid dots, in darker color) are based on the actual set of hand-coded data; the remaining estimates are projected values derived from the DSL power analysis, assuming additional hand-coded data (from left to right: more hand-coded data).

group and across the entire membership. I then include an interaction term for this dominance ratio and the treatment onset in the analysis. I also control for the proportion of states in the group that prioritize the issue. Figure D2 shows that as power becomes more concentrated within the IO's top group, the organization is more likely to respond to the challenge and expand its operational scope.[55]

4.3 Scope Expansion into Climate Issues

Figure 6 shows a substantial increase in climate-related hiring among non-climate IOs whose major principal increased climate priority.[56] For example, these IOs include the ADB, the International Organization for Migration, the Pacific Islands Forum, etc. This effect translates into all new staff having a 27.5% increase in their daily work related to climate issues, or on average, each IO hiring

[55]In contrast, dominance measured across all members has little effect. This pattern is intuitive: what matters for shaping bureaucratic adaptation is not general inequality among all members, but concentrated influence among the small set of states with the capacity and interest to steer organizational priorities.

[56]The post-treatment window is set to one year to exclude distraction from the US withdrawal from Paris Agreement.

121 additional staff members to work on climate issues across 43 IOs.[57] The effect is consistently significant at the 95% level, and the power analysis shows that the confidence interval further tightens as the number of hand-coded data increases. In contrast, there is no effect among the other non-climate IOs, where the major principal of the organization do not exhibit significant changes in their prioritization of climate change. This pattern demonstrates selective bureaucratic adaptation: bureaucracies expand only when their major principal increase priority on climate.

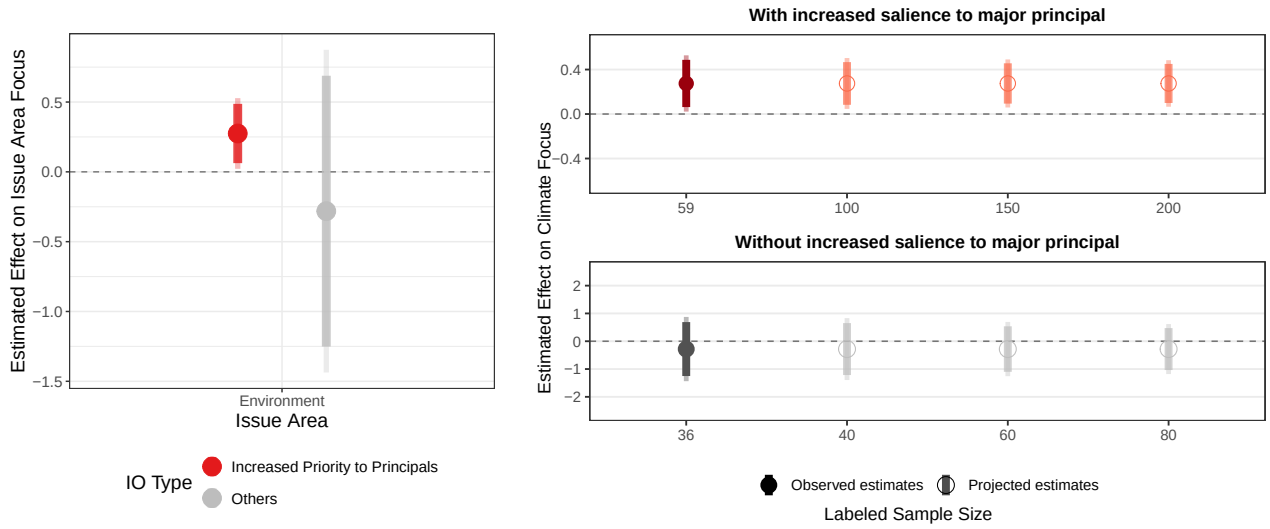
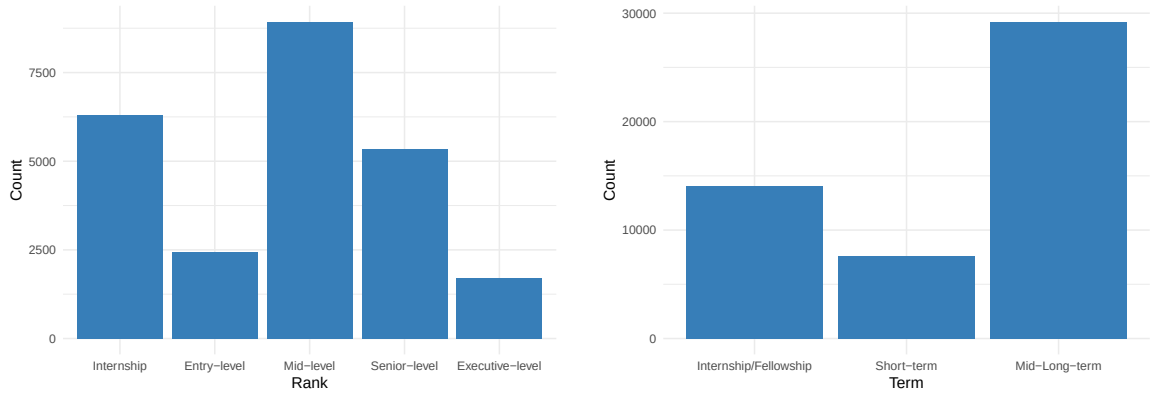


Figure 6: Bureaucratic Expansion into Climate Issues in Non-climate IOs

Note: The figure plots changes in non-climate IOs' climate focus following the Paris Agreement drafting period and the 2015 UNGA speeches in September, relative to the control IOs. The left-hand-side figure shows the raw estimates, and the right-hand-side figure shows power analysis assuming additional hand-coded quarter-IO units. Points represent average treatment effects with 90% (thick) and 95% (thin) confidence intervals. In the right-hand-side figure, estimates on the left (solid dots, in darker color) are based on the actual set of hand-coded data; the remaining estimates are projected values derived from the DSL power analysis, assuming additional hand-coded data (from left to right: more hand-coded data).

Climate-related roles in these IOs include Climate Change Risk Assessment Specialist, Environmental Affairs Officer, Senior Energy Consultant, etc., reflecting concrete bureaucratic reorientation.Importantly, this expansion is not limited to short-term hiring aimed at signaling responsiveness to states. Rather, it reflects bureaucratic intentions to bring about meaningful transformations within IOs. Figure 7 demonstrates that the majority of climate hires in these IOs are mid- to senior-level appointments for mid- and long-term positions.

[57]This estimate is based on their average number of new job postings in 2015 and 2016.



(a) Job rank (b) Job term

Figure 7: Rank and Terms of Climate-related Jobs in IOs with Increased Principal Priorities

Note: The x-axis is job rank and term categories, and the y-axis is the number of climate-related jobs in IOs whose principal priorities on climate increase. The job rank plot excludes jobs without a clear rank description.

5 Changing Principal Priorities and IO Scope

The above analysis examines how IOs with differing major principal priorities respond to global challenges. Given an existing global challenge, however, we also expect to see IO bureaucracies adjusting scope when principal priorities shift away. To analyze this relationship, this section uses a different research design in which the global challenge itself remains stable, the treatment is a change in a state's priority, the treated units are IOs where this state is the major principal, and the control units are other IOs. Specifically, I examine the focus of U.S.-dominated IOs, where the U.S. is the largest economy, on climate after Trump's election victory in November 2016.[58] The salience of climate change as a global challenge remains stable, but the U.S. decreased priority on climate change.[59] We therefore expect U.S.-dominated IOs to decrease their focus on climate after observing the election results relative to IOs dominated by other states. The treated units are U.S.-dominated organizations, while the control units are those dominated by other states.

Figure 8 shows the results. Development IOs are particularly active in expanding into climate

[58]I use the GDP of countries in 2016 because the election is close to the end of the year, and Trump entered office in 2017. Using GDP in 2015 produces similar results.

[59]See "Donald Trump's Energy Plan: More Fossil Fuels and Fewer Rules," New York Times, May 26 20216, retrieved from `https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/27/us/politics/donald-trump-global-warming-energy-policy.html`.

issues.[60] However, those under US dominance significantly decrease their focus on climate by around 26.14 percentage points in the year following Trump's election victory. Among all U.S.-dominated IOs, there is an 8.61 percentage point decrease in the focus on climate, although the effect is no longer significant at the 95% level.[61]

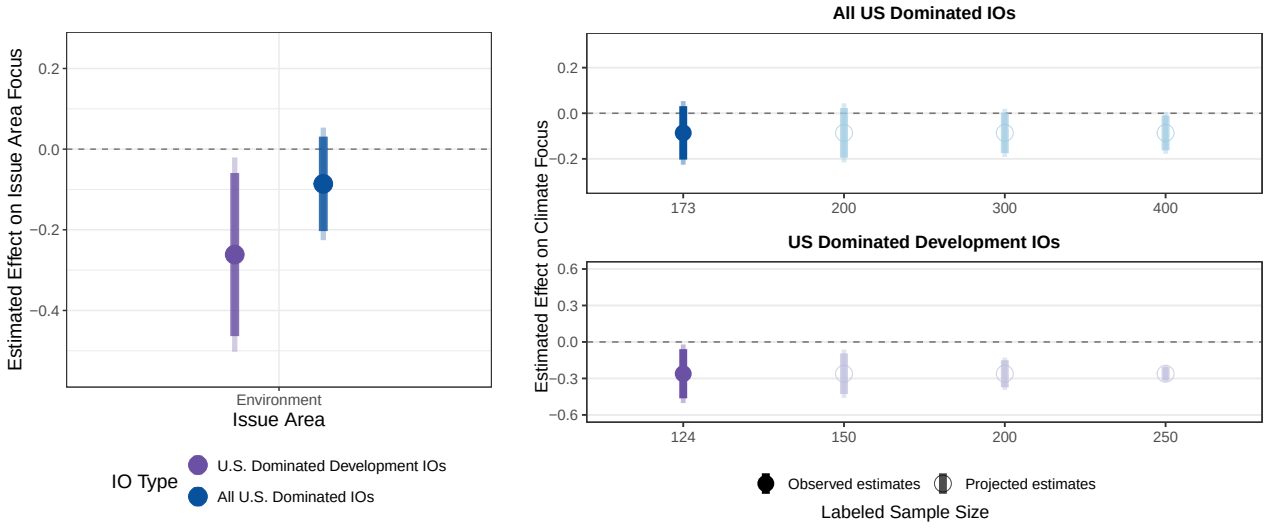


Figure 8: Bureaucratic Expansion into Climate Issues in Non-climate IOs: Trump Election

Note: The figure plots changes in non-climate US-dominated IOs' climate focus after Trump won the election in November 2016, relative to IOs dominated by other states. The left-hand-side figure shows the raw estimates, and the right-hand-side figure shows power analysis assuming additional hand-coded quarter-IO units. Points represent average treatment effects with 90% (thick) and 95% (thin) confidence intervals. In the right-hand-side figure, estimates on the left (solid dots, in darker color) are based on the actual set of hand-coded data; the remaining estimates are projected values derived from the DSL power analysis, assuming additional hand-coded data (from left to right: more hand-coded data).

Across both global challenges, evidence suggests a consistent pattern of selective, power-structured bureaucratic adaptation. When new global challenges emerge, IO bureaucracies expand their operational scope to address them only when their major principal elevate those challenges as priorities. When those priorities fade, IOs contract from the new issue even if the global challenge persists. These changes occur through bureaucratic channels that shift expertise and alter daily operations. As newly developed expertise diffuses to other staff within the organization, its influence

[60] See earlier discussion in 2.1.

[61] Here, we are analyzing the decreased work on climate in the IO's new hires. There might also be unobserved layoffs of existing climate-related staff, which would amplify the effect.

may be further amplified.[62]

6 Mechanism: IO Bureaucracy Taking Initiative

IOs expand selectively in response to new global challenges when their major principal elevate the priority of an issue. But who drives these expansions? Are bureaucracies acting first to reposition themselves, or are states directing expansion through funding decisions?

States increasingly steer IO activities through earmarked contributions, which restrict resources to specific issues or programs (Reinsberg et al., 2024). If scope expansion is directly state-driven, earmarked funding for a new issue should precede the expansion of IO activities. Conversely, if bureaucratic initiative plays a role, we should observe expansions even in the absence of new earmarked funding.

To assess this, I link the IO job posting data to 342,812 earmarked contribution records from Reinsberg et al. (2024). The issue areas in the earmark data are recoded to match the 26 topics used in the job postings analysis, resulting in 90 IOs that are covered in both datasets. Because earmarks primarily concern development-related organizations, I focus on their work on climate as the illustrative case. I conduct the analysis at the IO-year level and estimate whether increases in climate-related earmarked contributions (disbursements, commitments, or their shares of total contributions) predict greater bureaucratic focus on climate in the following year. If states were directly driving scope expansion, we should expect positive and statistically significant coefficients.

Table 2 reports two-way fixed-effects models with IO and year fixed effects and standard errors clustered by IO. The independent variable is the amount of climate-related earmarked contributions disbursed, committed, or the proportion of them to the total contributions that the IO obtains in a year. The dependent variable is the focus of an IO on climate in the following year. Across all specifications, there is no significant positive relationship between earmarked funding and subsequent scope expansion. In three specifications, the coefficients are even negative. The pattern remains

[62] See Clark and Zucker (2022).

Table 2: Earmarked Contributions and IO Scope

	IO Focus on Climate			
Climate Disbursed	-3.658×10^{-4}			
	(3.52×10^{-4})			
Climate Committed		1.312×10^{-4}		
		(1.355×10^{-4})		
Prop. Climate Committed			2.836×10^{-4}	
			(0.0329)	
Prop. Climate Disbursed				-0.0795*
				(0.0337)
Num.Obs.	903	903	903	903
R^2	0.758	0.758	0.758	0.759
R^2 Adj.	0.702	0.702	0.702	0.704
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
IO FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ p $<$ 0.1, * p $<$ 0.05, ** p $<$ 0.01, ** p $<$ 0.001

unchanged if we examine the effect of earmarked funding on IOs' focus two or three years later.[63]

This lack of alignment suggests that bureaucratic expansion into new issue areas frequently occurs without preceding increases in earmarked resources, indicating that bureaucracies can reallocate effort within existing budget constraints and driven by bureaucratic initiative, rather than directly pushed by states. On the other hand, successful expansion does not automatically translate into increased funding. Some IOs may subsequently attract additional resources, while others may not, depending on how principals evaluate their performance and the availability of alternative venues. Understanding when scope expansion leads to organizational growth and when it does not is an important question for future research.

7 Conclusion

Conventional accounts often portray international organizations as operating within a fixed and narrowly defined scope delegated by states. This paper challenges that view. I argue that IOs frequently expand their operational scope beyond formal mandates through bureaucratic initiative that is structured by state power. Rather than acting as either passive agents or fully autonomous

[63] See Table D5.

entrepreneurs, IO bureaucracies proactively reshape staff tasking and expertise in ways that align organizational activities with the priorities of the major principal. This perspective reconciles sociological accounts of bureaucratic initiative with arguments focusing on state control. Bureaucratic autonomy does not insulate IOs from power; it is the mechanism through which shifts in principal priorities are translated into organizational change. Therefore, adaptation is neither automatic nor uniform. When new global challenges arise, IOs expand into new issue areas only when the major principal elevate those issues as priorities. When the major principal remain indifferent, IOs tend to operate within their existing mandates.

Empirically, this study introduces job postings as a new measure of IO operations, capturing how bureaucracies assign staff to tasks and institutionalize expertise, which is an important determinant of organizational function in practice. Analyzing 630,500 job postings across 234 IOs from 2007 to 2024, I show that operational scope is highly flexible over time. Focusing on artificial intelligence and climate change, I demonstrate that IOs whose core mandates did not originally include these domains nonetheless expand into them, but only when their major principal increase attention to the issue. When the challenge persists but the major principal shifts its attention away, IOs also contract from that issue area.

The findings shed light on a core question in international relations: How is the global governance agenda being set? States are not the only actors determining the landscape of global governance. Instead, bureaucracies play a central role in defining what IOs do in practice by reallocating staff time and embedding new forms of expertise. Through these operational decisions, IOs expand their functional reach in ways that ultimately reflect the priorities of powerful states, even in the absence of direct instructions or formal mandate change.

At the same time, while bureaucratic flexibility may enhance responsiveness to emerging challenges, it also raises concerns about accountability, efficiency, and coordination. Member states join IOs to cooperate on specific mandate issues, yet bureaucratic scope expansion can redirect organizational capacity toward issues prioritized by the major principal rather than those originally agreed upon. Interviews with senior staff reveal concerns that such expansion may dilute atten-

tion to core functions, duplicate efforts across organizations, and intensify competition rather than coordination among IOs. Understanding when such adaptation improves governance outcomes and when it undermines efficiency remains an important task for future research. This study also speaks to the literature on the vitality of IOs (Gray, 2018). While scope expansion is used to increase vitality, future studies should examine whether this is more likely when the IO is gaining or losing vitality. It also raises questions on the creation of IOs: If existing IOs expand to address new issues, when will new institutions be created?

Beyond the IO level, the logic of relevance-seeking bureaucratic adaptation may possibly extend to other bureaucratic systems. Domestic agencies and non-governmental organizations may similarly reallocate staff and expertise toward issues prioritized by political leaders or major funders, particularly in settings where centralized coordination is weak, such as when issues emerge suddenly, cut across jurisdictions, or exceed existing administrative capacity. Future research can investigate when such decentralized adaptation exists and its consequences across institutions.

References

Abbott, K. W., J. F. Green, and R. O. Keohane (2016). Organizational ecology and institutional change in global governance. *International Organization 70*(2), 247–277.

Acemoglu, D. and D. Autor (2011). Skills, tasks and technologies: Implications for employment and earnings. In *Handbook of labor economics*, Volume 4, pp. 1043–1171. Elsevier.

Autor, D. H., F. Levy, and R. J. Murnane (2003). The skill content of recent technological change: An empirical exploration. *The Quarterly journal of economics 118*(4), 1279–1333.

Bailey, M. A., A. Strezhnev, and E. Voeten (2017). Estimating dynamic state preferences from united nations voting data. *Journal of Conflict Resolution 61*(2), 430–456.

Barnett, M. N. and M. Finnemore (1999). The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations. *International Organization 53*(4), 699–732.

Baturo, A., N. Dasandi, and S. J. Mikhaylov (2017). Understanding state preferences with text as data: Introducing the un general debate corpus. *Research & Politics 4*(2), 2053168017712821.

Carnegie, A., R. Clark, and S. Chung (2024). Global governance unbound? expansion dynamics in the imf.

Carpenter, D. (2002). *The forging of bureaucratic autonomy: Reputations, networks, and policy innovation in executive agencies, 1862-1928*. Princeton University Press.

Chayes, A. and A. H. Chayes (1998). *The new sovereignty: compliance with international regulatory agreements*. Harvard University Press.

Clark, R. and L. R. Dolan (2021). Pleasing the principal: Us influence in world bank policymaking. *American Journal of Political Science 65*(1), 36–51.

Clark, R. and N. Zucker (2022). Climate cascades: Ios and the prioritization of climate action. *American Journal of Political Science Forthcoming*.

Copelovitch, M. S. (2010). *The International Monetary Fund in the Global Economy: Banks, Bonds, and Bailouts*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Davis, C. L. (2004). International institutions and issue linkage: Building support for agricultural trade liberalization. *American Political Science Review 98*(1), 153–169.

Davis, C. L. (2023). *Discriminatory Clubs: The Geopolitics of International Organizations*. Princeton University Press.

Davis, C. L. and T. Pratt (2021). The forces of attraction: How security interests shape membership in economic institutions. *The Review of International Organizations 16*(4), 903–929.

Downs, G. W., D. M. Rocke, and P. N. Barsoom (1996). Is the good news about compliance good news about cooperation? *International organization 50*(3), 379–406.

Dreher, A. and J.-E. Sturm (2012). Do the IMF and the World Bank influence voting in the UN General Assembly? *Public Choice 151*, 363–397.

Dreher, A., J.-E. Sturm, and J. R. Vreeland (2009). Global horse trading: IMF loans for votes in the United Nations Security Council. *European Economic Review 53*(7), 742–757.

Egami, N., M. Hinck, B. Stewart, and H. Wei (2024). Using imperfect surrogates for downstream inference: Design-based supervised learning for social science applications of large language models. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 36*.

Epstein, D. and S. O'halloran (1994). Administrative procedures, information, and agency discretion. *American Journal of Political Science*, 697–722.

Feijóo, C., Y. Kwon, J. M. Bauer, E. Bohlin, B. Howell, R. Jain, P. Potgieter, K. Vu, J. Whalley, and J. Xia (2020). Harnessing artificial intelligence (ai) to increase wellbeing for all: The case for a new technology diplomacy. *Telecommunications Policy 44*(6), 101988.

Frieden, J. (2016). The governance of international finance. *Annual Review of Political Science 19*, 33–48.

Glaser, C. L. (1993). Why nato is still best: Future security arrangements for europe. *International Security 18*(1), 5–50.

Goldstein, J. L., D. Rivers, and M. Tomz (2007). Institutions in international relations: Understanding the effects of the gatt and the wto on world trade. *International organization 61*(1), 37–67.

Gray, J. (2018). Life, death, or zombie? the vitality of international organizations. *International Studies Quarterly 62*(1), 1–13.

Haftel, Y. Z. and S. C. Hofmann (2019). Rivalry and overlap: Why regional economic organizations encroach on security organizations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution 63*(9), 2180–2206.

Hawkins, D. G., D. A. Lake, D. L. Nielson, and M. J. Tierney (2006). *Delegation and agency in international organizations*. Cambridge University Press.

Hooghe, L. (2017). *Measuring international authority*, Volume 3. Oxford University Press.

Hooghe, L., T. Lenz, and G. Marks (2019). *A theory of international organization*. Oxford University Press.

Huber, J. D. and C. R. Shipan (2002). *Deliberate discretion?: The institutional foundations of bureaucratic autonomy*. Cambridge University Press.

Ikenberry, G. J. (1996). The future of international leadership. *Political Science Quarterly 111*(3), 385–402.

Johnson, T. (2014). *Organizational progeny: Why governments are losing control over the proliferating structures of global governance*. Transformations in Governance.

Johnson, T. (2016). Cooperation, co-optation, competition, conflict: International bureaucracies and non-governmental organizations in an interdependent world. *Review of International Political Economy 23*(5), 737–767.

Kentikelenis, A. and E. Voeten (2021). Legitimacy challenges to the liberal world order: Evidence from united nations speeches, 1970–2018. *The Review of International Organizations 16*(4), 721–754.

Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony*, Volume 54. Princeton: Princeton university press.

Kilby, C. (2011). Informal influence in the asian development bank. *The Review of International Organizations 6*(3), 223–257.

Koremenos, B. (2016). *The continent of international law: Explaining agreement design*. Cambridge University Press.

Koremenos, B., C. Lipson, and D. Snidal (2001). The rational design of international institutions. *International organization 55*(4), 761–799.

Lall, R. (2023). *Making international institutions work: The politics of performance*. Cambridge University Press.

Lee, H. N.-K. and Y.-M. Liou (2022). Where you work is where you stand: A firm-based framework for understanding trade opinion. *International Organization 76*(3), 713–740.

Lim, D. Y. M. and J. R. Vreeland (2013). Regional organizations and international politics: Japanese influence over the asian development bank and the un security council. *World Politics 65*(1), 34–72.

Lipscy, P. Y. and H. N.-K. Lee (2019). The imf as a biased global insurance mechanism: Asymmetrical moral hazard, reserve accumulation, and financial crises. *International Organization 73*(1), 35–64.

Liu, Y., M. Ott, N. Goyal, J. Du, M. Joshi, D. Chen, O. Levy, M. Lewis, L. Zettlemoyer, and V. Stoyanov (2019). Roberta: A robustly optimized bert pretraining approach. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1907.11692*.

Lugg, A. (2024). Re-contracting intergovernmental organizations: Membership change and the creation of linked intergovernmental organizations. *The Review of International Organizations 19*(3), 545–577.

Luna, J., I. Tan, X. Xie, and L. Jiang (2024). Navigating governance paradigms: A cross-regional comparative study of generative ai governance processes & principles. In *Proceedings of the AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society*, Volume 7, pp. 917–931.

Lundgren, M., T. Squatrito, T. Sommerer, and J. Tallberg (2024). Introducing the intergovernmental policy output dataset (ipod). *The review of international organizations 19*(1), 117–146.

Moe, T. M. (1984). The new economics of organization. *American journal of political science*, 739–777.

Mokry, S. and J. Gurol (2024). Competing ambitions regarding the global governance of artificial intelligence: China, the us, and the eu. *Global Policy 15*(5), 955–968.

Niskanen, J. (1971). *Bureaucracy and representative government*. Routledge.

Ocampo, J. A. and K. D. González (2024). *The Role of Multilateral Development Banks and Development Assistance in the Provision of Global Public Goods*. UNDP Human Development Report Office.

Olugbade, O. (2025). In search of a global governance mechanism for artificial intelligence (ai): A collective action perspective. *Global Public Policy and Governance*, 1–23.

Pratt, T. (2018). Deference and hierarchy in international regime complexes. *International Organization 72*(3), 561–590.

Reinsberg, B., M. Heinzel, and C. Siauwijaya (2024). Tracking earmarked funding to international organizations: Introducing the earmarked funding dataset. *The Review of International Organizations*, 1–27.

Shleifer, A. and R. W. Vishny (1989). Management entrenchment: The case of manager-specific investments. *Journal of financial economics 25*(1), 123–139.

Stone, R. W. (2011). *Controlling institutions: International organizations and the global economy*. Cambridge University Press.

Streeck, W., K. Thelen, et al. (2009). Institutional change in advanced political economies. *Debating Varieties of capitalism: a reader*, 95–131.

Wan, M. (1995). Japan and the asian development bank. *Pacific Affairs*, 509–528.

Weaver, C. (2008). *Hypocrisy trap: The World Bank and the poverty of reform*. Princeton University Press.

Wilson, J. Q. (1989). *Bureaucracy: What government agencies do and why they do it*. Basic Books.

Zaccaria, G. (2024). Using covid-19 as opportunity: the role of the aiibs leadership in its strategic adaptation to the pandemic. *The Pacific Review 37*(2), 419–444.

Appendix:

The Scope Expansion of International Organizations

A Data Collection

Source	Number of Postings	Organizations
Inspira	139,924	UN Agencies
Devex	118,661	IGOs
Impactpool	234,272	IGOs
UNTalent	135,668	IGOs
HKS Career Office/Individual official websites/ Twitter/ Wayback Machine/Others	2,001	IGOs

Table A1: Data Sources[64]

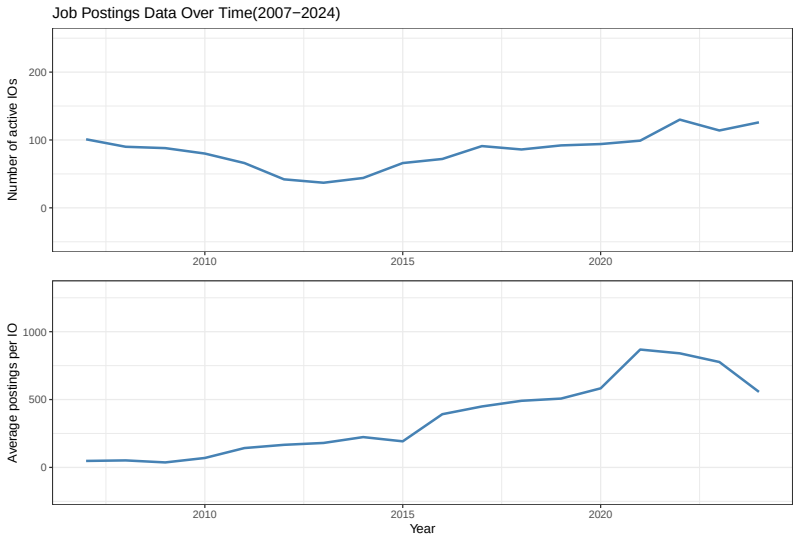


Figure A1: The Number of Job Postings Over Time

Note: The x-axis is time. The top panel shows the number of IOs that have posted jobs in a year. The bottom panel shows the average number of postings per IO.

[64]Data collection follows the same rule as consulting firms like Lightcast, which collect all job postings available from the internet. The data were collected from August 2023 to March 2024. It starts with the MIA-covered IOs and then expands to all IOs covered by these sources. Due to computational constraints, Devex job postings after 2015 cover only large IOs, because Impactpool has good coverage after 2015.

ID	Name
1	ASEAN Foundation
2	ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network
3	ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office
4	Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics
5	Adaptation Fund
6	Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
7	African Development Bank
8	African Development Bank Group
9	African Development Fund
10	African Ministers' Council on Water
11	African Trade Insurance Agency
12	African Union
13	Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators
14	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
15	Asian Development Bank
16	Asian Development Bank Institute
17	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
18	Asian Productivity Organization
19	Association of South East Asian Nations
20	Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission
21	Bank for International Settlements
22	Biobanking and BioMolecular resources Research Infrastructure
23	Black Sea Trade and Development Bank
24	Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications
25	Bureau International des Expositions
26	CABI
27	CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security
28	CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality
29	CGIAR System Organization
30	Caribbean Community
31	Caribbean Development Bank
32	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
33	Central European Free Trade Agreement
34	Commission for Environmental Cooperation
35	Common Fund for Commodities
36	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
37	Commonwealth Secretariat
38	Conference of States Parties of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
39	Consejo Centroamericano de Superintendentes de Bancos, de Seguros y de Otras Instituciones Financieras
40	Council of Europe

Table A2: IOs Covered in the Data (1)

ID	Name
41	Council of Europe Development Bank
42	Council of the European Union
43	Counter-Terrorism Committee
44	Court of Justice of the European Union
45	East African Community
46	East African Development Bank
47	Economic Community of West African States
48	EUROCONTROL
49	Eurojust
50	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
51	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
52	European Banking Authority
53	European Central Bank
54	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
55	European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts
56	European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research
57	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
58	European Chemicals Agency
59	European Commission
60	European Council
61	European Court of Human Rights
62	European Data Protection Board
63	European Defence Agency
64	European Economic and Social Committee
65	European Economic Area
66	European Environment Agency
67	European External Action Service
68	European Fisheries Control Agency
69	European Food Safety Authority
70	European Forest Institute
71	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
72	European Free Trade Association
73	European Institute for Gender Equality
74	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
75	European Institute of Public Administration
76	European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority
77	European Investment Bank
78	European Investment Fund
79	European Labour Authority
80	European Maritime Safety Agency

Table A3: IOs Covered in the Data (2)

ID	Name
81	European Medicines Agency
82	European Molecular Biology Laboratory
83	European Ombudsman
84	European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites
85	European Organization for Nuclear Research
86	European Parliament
87	European Partnership of Supervisory Organisations in Health Services and Social Care
88	European Patent Office
89	European Police Office
90	European Public Law Organization
91	European Research Council
92	European Schoolnet
93	European Securities and Markets Authority
94	European Southern Observatory
95	European Space Agency
96	European Stability Mechanism
97	European Training Foundation
98	European Union
99	European Union Agency for Asylum
100	European Union Agency for Cybersecurity
101	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
102	European Union Agency for Railways
103	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
104	European Union Agency for the Space Programme
105	European Union Aviation Safety Agency
106	European Union Drugs Agency
107	European Union Institute for Security Studies
108	European Union Intellectual Property Office
109	European Union Satellite Centre
110	European University Institute
111	Focusing Resources on Effective School Health
112	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
113	Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency
114	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
115	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
116	Green Climate Fund
117	Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking
118	IMPACT - International Initiative Against Avoidable Disablement
119	Inter-American Development Bank
120	Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources

Table A4: IOs Covered in the Data (3)

ID	Name
121	Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice
122	Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs
123	International Agency for Research on Cancer
124	International Atomic Energy Agency
125	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
126	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
127	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
128	International Civil Aviation Organization
129	International Civil Service Commission
130	International Commission on Missing Persons
131	International Court of Justice
132	International Criminal Court
133	International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL
134	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
135	International Customs Tariffs Bureau
136	International Development Association
137	International Development Law Organization
138	International Development Research Centre
139	International Energy Agency
140	International Energy Forum
141	International Finance Corporation
142	International Fund for Agricultural Development
143	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
144	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
145	International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law
146	International Labour Organization
147	International Livestock Research Institute
148	International Maritime Organization
149	International Monetary Fund
150	International Network for Bamboo and Rattan
151	International Organisation of Vine and Wine
152	International Organization for Migration
153	International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation
154	International Renewable Energy Agency
155	International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
156	International Seabed Authority
157	International Telecommunication Union
158	International Trade Centre
159	International Training Centre of the ILO
160	International Tropical Timber Organization

Table A5: IOs Covered in the Data (4)

ID	Name
161	International Vaccine Institute
162	Islamic Development Bank
163	Joint Committee of the Nordic Medical Research Councils
164	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
165	King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue
166	Mekong River Commission
167	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
168	NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control Force Command
169	NATO Defense College
170	NATO Support and Procurement Agency
171	New Development Bank
172	Nordic Development Fund
173	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
174	OECD Development Centre
175	OPEC Fund for International Development
176	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
177	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
178	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
179	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
180	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
181	Organization of American States
182	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
183	OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
184	OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
185	Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
186	Pan American Health Organization
187	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
188	Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
189	Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe
190	SAARC Development Fund
191	SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre
192	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
193	Southern African Development Community
194	Southern Common Market
195	The Hague Conference on Private International Law
196	The World Bank Group
197	Trade and Development Bank
198	UN Tourism
199	UN Women
200	UNDP International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth

Table A6: IOs Covered in the Data (5)

ID	Name
201	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
202	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
203	Union for the Mediterranean
204	United Nations
205	United Nations Children's Fund
206	United Nations Development Programme
207	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
208	United Nations Environment Programme
209	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - Secretariat
210	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
211	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
212	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
213	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
214	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
215	United Nations Office for Project Services
216	United Nations Population Fund
217	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
218	United Nations System Staff College
219	United Nations University
220	Universal Postal Union
221	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
222	World Bank Institute
223	World Customs Organization
224	World Food Programme
225	World Health Organization
226	World Intellectual Property Organization
227	World Meteorological Organization
228	World Trade Organization
229	Latin American Integration Association
230	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
231	Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail
232	Permanent Court of Arbitration
233	Pacific Islands Forum
234	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

Table A7: IOs Covered in the Data (6)

IO	Freq	Share
United Nations	225531	0.358
United Nations Development Programme	83115	0.132
World Health Organization	35231	0.056
United Nations Children's Fund	30886	0.049
World Food Programme	30207	0.048
United Nations Environment Programme	28551	0.045
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	24261	0.038
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	20911	0.033
Asian Development Bank	19905	0.032
The World Bank Group	16298	0.026
United Nations Office for Project Services	16145	0.026
UN Women	12773	0.020
United Nations Human Settlements Programme	9377	0.015
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	9238	0.015
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	7110	0.011
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe	5295	0.008
United Nations Population Fund	5012	0.008
International Organization for Migration	4644	0.007
International Atomic Energy Agency	4134	0.007
African Development Bank	3577	0.006
European Investment Bank	3287	0.005
European Space Agency	2743	0.004
International Finance Corporation	2736	0.004
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	2681	0.004
European Organization for Nuclear Research	1794	0.003
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	1371	0.002
International Civil Aviation Organization	1325	0.002
International Monetary Fund	1256	0.002
CGIAR System Organization	1146	0.002
African Union	1114	0.002

Table A8: Top 30 International Organizations by the Number of Job Postings

B Elite Interview Details

ID	International Organization	Interview Date	Interviewee Role
1	World Meteorological Organization	May 2025	Country representative
2	International Labour Organization	May 2025	Officer at Department of Partnerships and Field Support Department
3	International Monetary Fund	August 2025	Senior officer at Strategy, Policy and Review Department; Senior officer at the Managing Director Office
4	(a) World Food Programme; (b) International Monetary Fund	August 2025	Human Resource officer
5	(a) Caribbean Development Bank; (b) Inter-American Development Bank; (c) International Monetary Fund	August 2025	Senior leadership
6	International Monetary Fund	August 2025	Human Resource officer
7	International Labour Organization	August 2025	Senior economist
8	International Finance Corporation	August 2025	Anonymous staff (other information confidential)
9	International Labour Organization	August 2025	Programme manager
10	International Labour Organization	August 2025	Senior leadership
11	(a) Caribbean Development Bank; (b) Inter-American Development Bank; (c) United Nations	August 2025	Specialist staff
12	World Bank	August 2025	Senior economist
13	(a) International Monetary Fund; (b) Bank for International Settlements	August 2025	Senior leadership
14	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	September 2025	Anonymous staff (other information confidential)

Table B1: Elite Interview Information

C Additional Tables and Figures on Data and Measurement

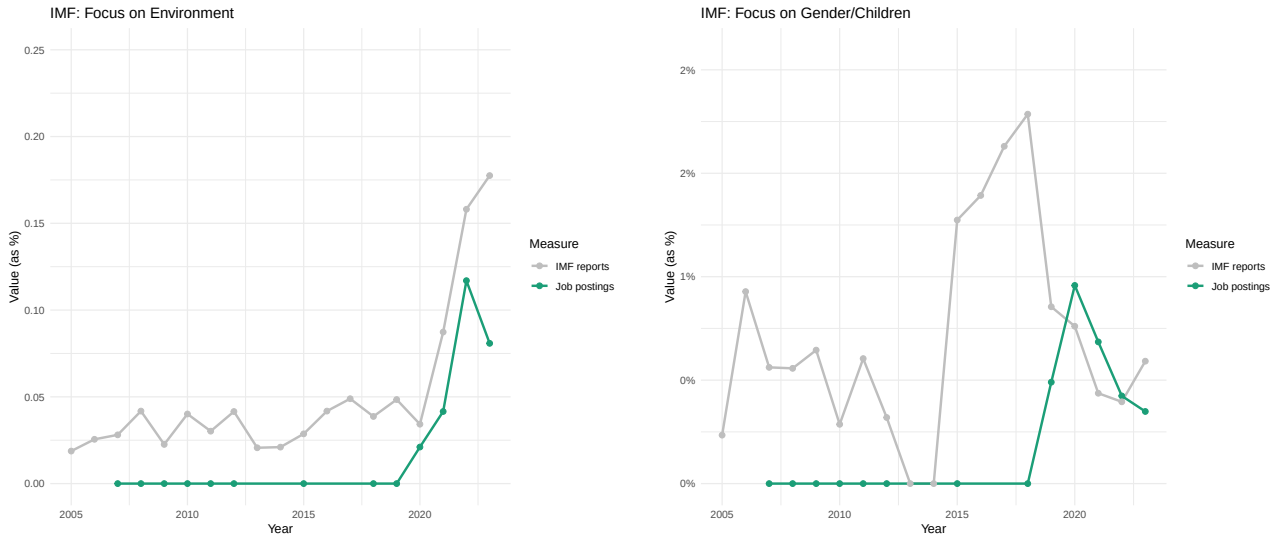
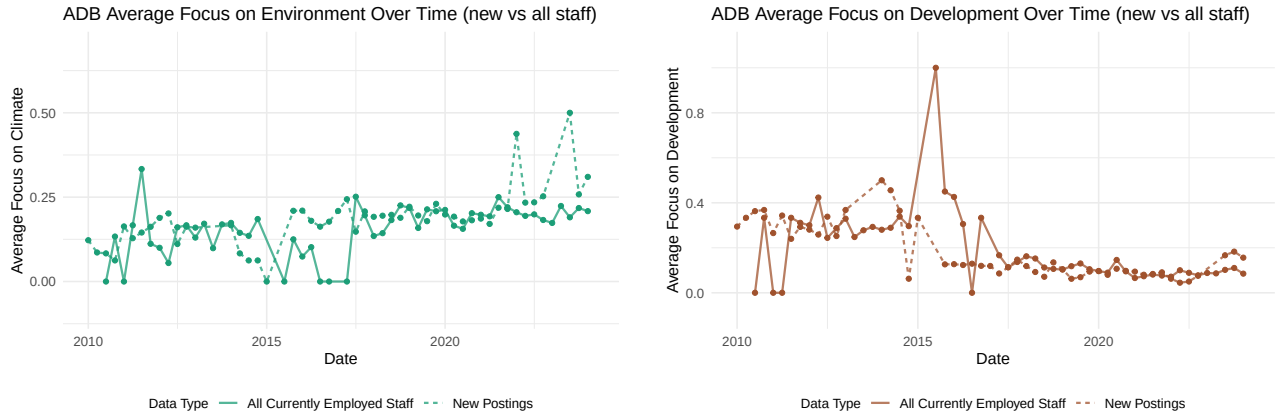


Figure C1: IMF Job Postings and Policy Reports

Note: The x-axis is time, and the y-axis is the average focus of the IMF on an issue (job postings) or the proportion of IMF policy reports with labels in an issue area. The green lines are job postings, and the gray lines are policy outputs.



(a) Climate (b) Development

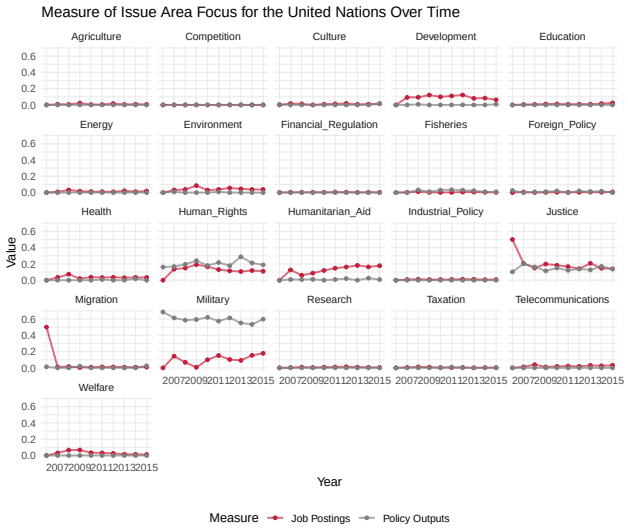
Figure C2: The Focus of the Asian Development Bank on Climate: New vs All employed Staff

Note: The x-axis is time, and the y-axis is the ADB's average focus on climate/development over time. The dashed line is calculated based on the job postings posted during each current quarter on the x-axis. The solid line is calculated based on all currently employed bureaucrats up to the current quarter on the x-axis.

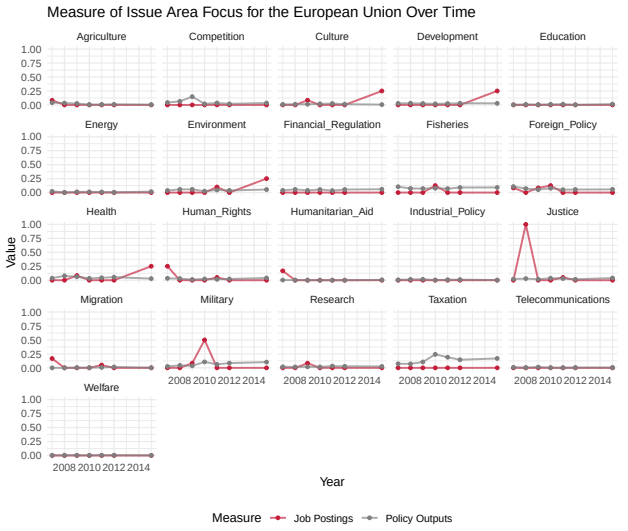
Table C1: Issue Prediction Model (fine-tuned RoBERTa) Performance on the Test Set by Topic

Issue Area	**Precision**	**Recall**	**F1-score**
Administration	0.97	0.97	0.97
Agriculture	0.99	1.00	0.99
Competition policy, mergers, state aid, antitrust	1.00	0.76	0.87
Culture and media	0.97	0.93	0.95
Education, vocational training, youth	1.00	0.97	0.99
Development, aid to poor countries	1.00	0.97	0.98
Financial regulation, monetary policy	0.96	0.96	0.96
Welfare state, employment, pensions	0.96	1.00	0.98
Energy (coal, oil, renewables)	1.00	0.95	0.98
Environment	0.99	0.99	0.99
Financial stabilization	1.00	0.88	0.94
Foreign policy	1.00	0.81	0.90
Fisheries and maritime affairs	1.00	0.98	0.99
Health	0.99	0.97	0.98
Humanitarian aid	1.00	0.97	0.98
Human rights and democracy	0.99	0.95	0.97
Industrial policy	1.00	0.97	0.98
Justice and security	0.99	0.98	0.99
Migration and refugees	1.00	0.94	0.97
Military and defense	1.00	0.96	0.98
Regional development	0.99	1.00	0.99
Research and science	0.99	0.95	0.97
Taxation and macroeconomic policy	1.00	0.96	0.98
Telecom, internet, postal services	1.00	0.96	0.98
Trade and IP rights	1.00	0.98	0.99
Transport (rail, air, shipping)	1.00	0.93	0.96
Artificial Intelligence	1.00	0.73	0.84
Micro avg	0.99	0.97	0.98
Macro avg	0.99	0.94	0.96
Weighted avg	0.99	0.97	0.98
Samples avg	0.96	0.95	0.95

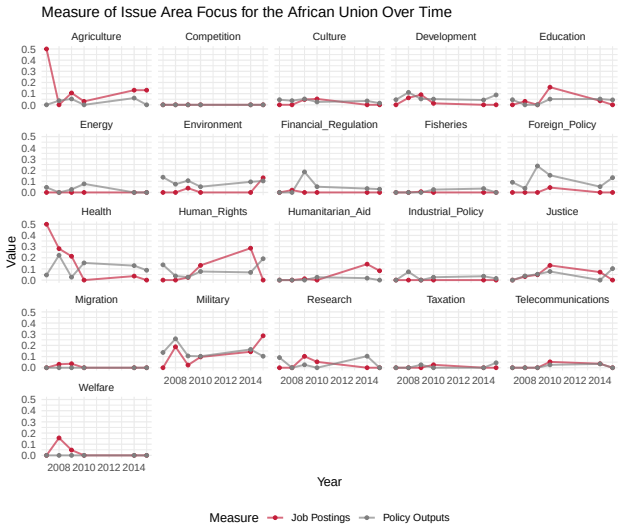
Note: The table reports out-of-sample performance of the fine-tuned RoBERTa model on the test set. Overall performance indicates high classification accuracy across issue areas.



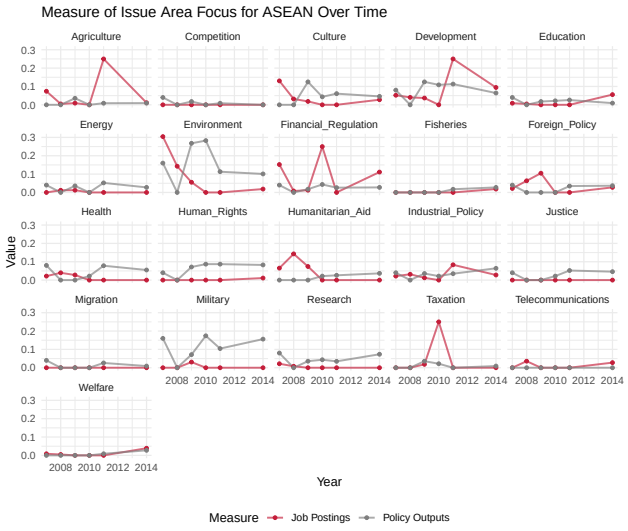
(a) UN



(b) EU



(c) AU



(d) ASEAN

Figure C3: IO Job Postings and Policy Acts

Note: The x-axis is time, and the y-axis is the average focus of an IO on an issue (job postings) or the proportion of an IO's policy acts in an issue area (IPOD data). The red lines are job postings, and the blue lines are policy acts.

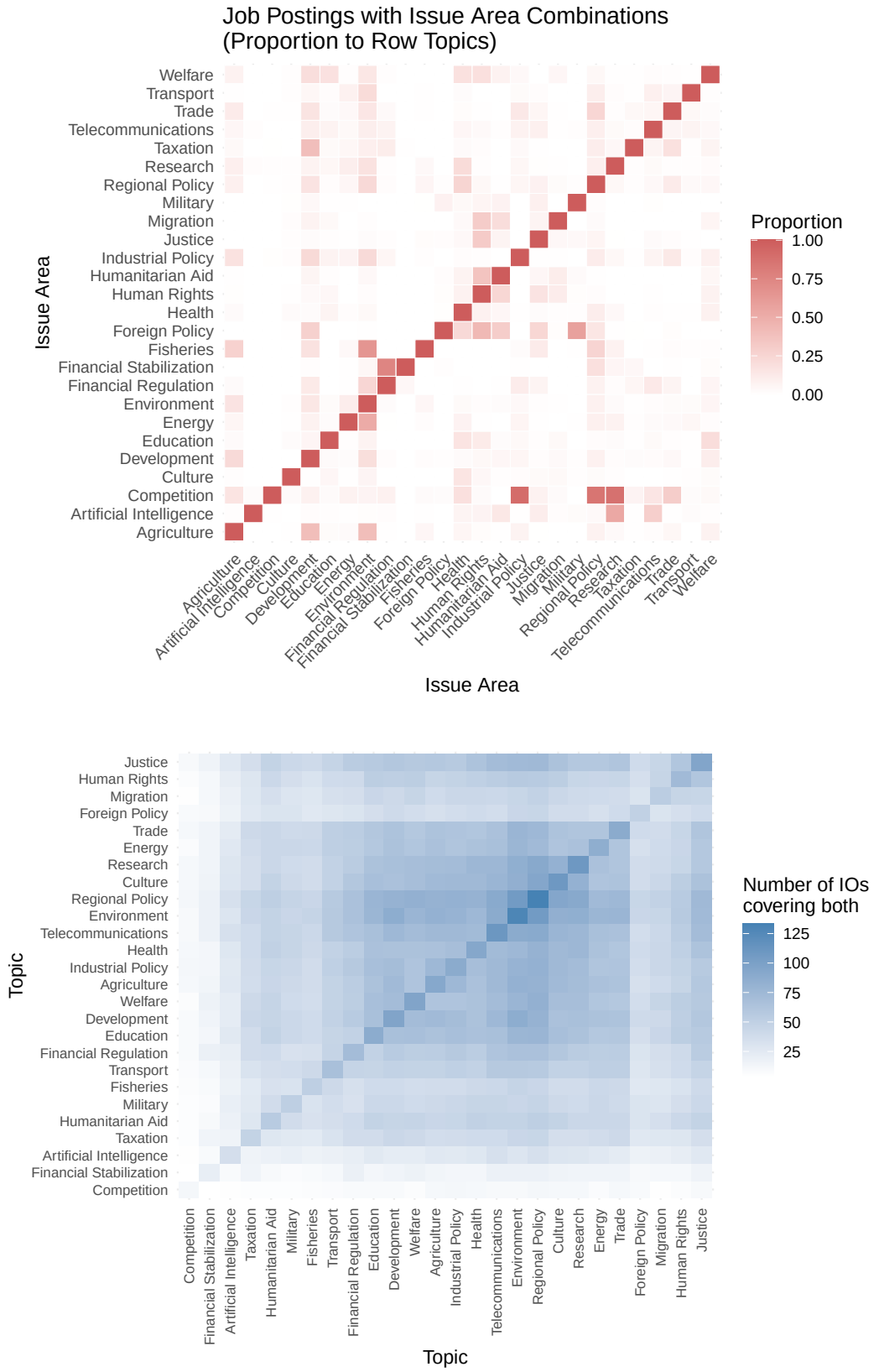
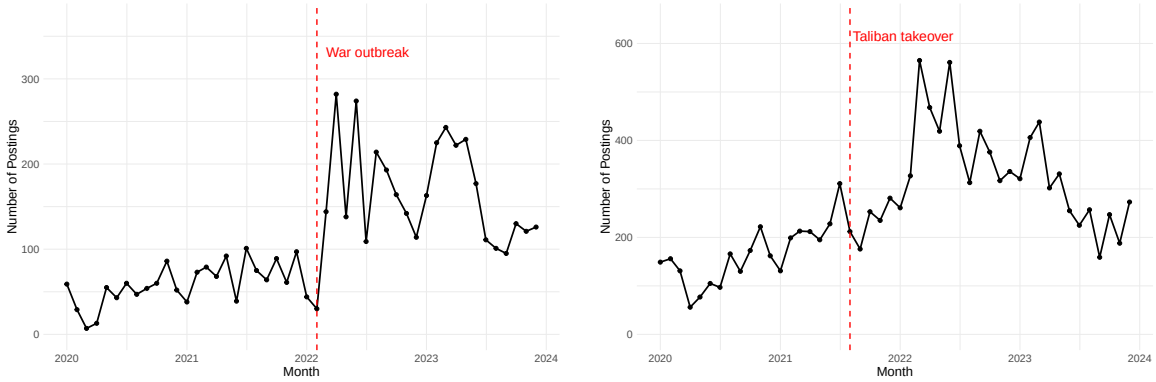


Figure C4: Top: Heatmap on the prevalence of topic coexistence in job postings. Bottom: Heatmap on the number of IOs focusing on topic combinations.



(a) Ukraine Crisis (b) Taliban Takeover

Figure C5: IO Shift in Focus on Specific Events Over Time

Note: The x-axis is time, and the y-axis is the number of job postings mentioning relevant keywords by month. The dashed lines are the onset of the Russia- Ukraine war and Afghanistan's fall to the Taliban. Both figures show that after salient world events, the prevalence of relevant keywords ("Ukraine"/"Ukrainian" in (a) and "Afghanistan"/"Taliban" in (b)) increases immediately in IO job postings. This validation figure is based on UNTalent data (2020-2024).

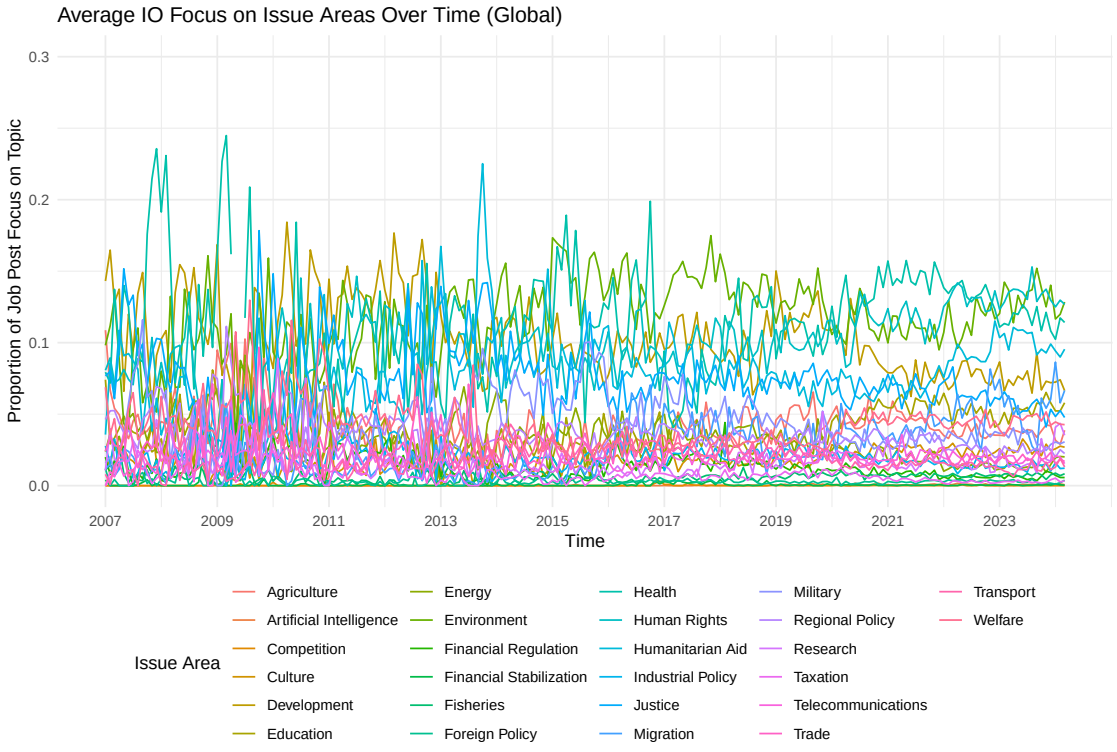
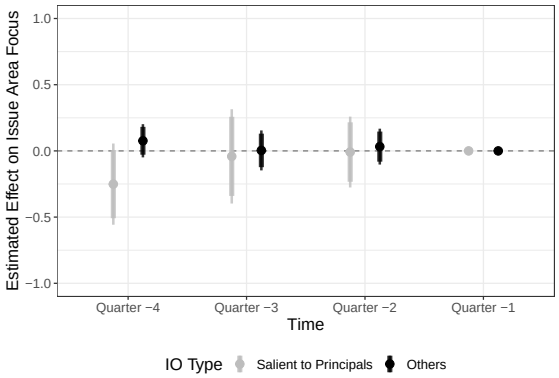


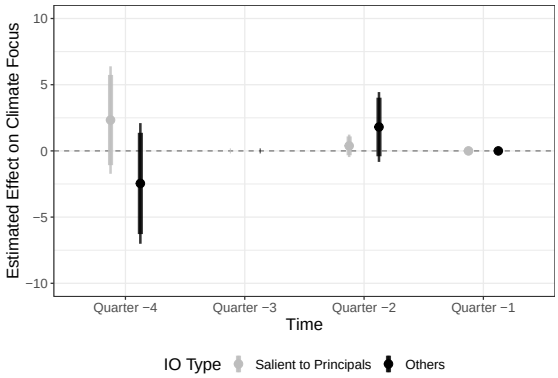
Figure C6: Aggregated Focus of IOs on All Issues Over Time

Note: The x-axis is time, and the y-axis is the average focus of all IOs on an issue area.

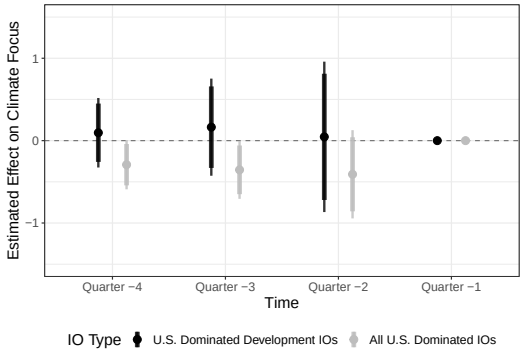
D Additional Analysis on Hypothesis Testing



(a) AI



(b) Climate



(c) Climate: Trump Election

Figure D1: Parallel Trends Test

Note: Each plot is a parallel trends test for one analysis. The x-axis indicates each pre-treatment period. The y-axis is the estimated coefficient. All 95% confidence intervals crossing zero imply parallel trends pre-treatment. (b) only includes three periods because IOs in this analysis did not post jobs in quarter -3. (c) shows a minor deviation from zero for U.S.-dominated IOs at time $t = -3$, but this deviation disappears in subsequent periods and runs counter to the estimated treatment effects. No pre-trend deviation is observed for the development IO group.

Treated (With increased major principal priority)	Council of Europe; EUROCONTROL; Eurojust; European Food Safety Authority; European Investment Bank; European Organization for Nuclear Research; European Research Council; European Securities and Markets Authority; European Space Agency; European Union; European Union Agency for Asylum; European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice; European Union Agency for the Space Programme; European Union Aviation Safety Agency; International Criminal Court; Council of Europe Development Bank; European Central Bank; European Commission; European Union Intellectual Property Office; European Banking Authority; European Environment Agency; European Fisheries Control Agency; European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions; European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority; European Medicines Agency; European Patent Office; European University Institute; International Centre for Migration Policy Development; Commonwealth Secretariat; European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control; European Chemicals Agency; European External Action Service; European Institute for Gender Equality; European Union Agency for Cybersecurity; European Union Agency for Railways; Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail; European Union Satellite Centre; European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training; European Institute of Innovation and Technology; Nordic Development Fund; European Data Protection Board; European Union Drugs Agency; Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs; European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts; Court of Justice of the European Union; European Defence Agency; European Investment Fund; European Forest Institute
Treated (Without increased major principal priority)	African Development Bank; African Union; Asian Development Bank; Association of South East Asian Nations; Bank for International Settlements; CABI; CGIAR System Organization; Caribbean Community; Caribbean Development Bank; Counter-Terrorism Committee; Economic Community of West African States; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Inter-American Development Bank; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Finance Corporation; International Fund for Agricultural Development; International Labour Organization; International Monetary Fund; International Organization for Migration; Islamic Development Bank; New Development Bank; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Pan American Health Organization; Southern African Development Community; The World Bank Group; UN Women; UNDP International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth; United Nations; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; United Nations Institute for Training and Research; United Nations Office for Project Services; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations University; World Food Programme; World Health Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization; World Meteorological Organization; World Trade Organization; Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation; Asian Productivity Organization; Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research; European Public Law Organization; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; International Development Law Organization; Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century; Common Fund for Commodities; International Telecommunication Union; Union for the Mediterranean; African Development Bank Group; International Trade Centre; OPEC Fund for International Development; Central European Free Trade Agreement; International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL; International Development Research Centre; Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance; Latin American Integration Association; International Court of Justice; European Partnership of Supervisory Organisations in Health Services and Social Care; OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency; United Nations System Staff College; Trade and Development Bank; Universal Postal Union
Control (IOs distant from the shock)	European Southern Observatory; Green Climate Fund; Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; International Livestock Research Institute; International Renewable Energy Agency; International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals; International Seabed Authority; Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; UN Tourism; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; International Network for Bamboo and Rattan; SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre; Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics; Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators; Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency; Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization

Table D1: AI Regime Analysis: International Organizations by Treatment Status

Treated (With increased major principal priority)	Asian Development Bank; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Finance Corporation; International Organization for Migration; Pan American Health Organization; The World Bank Group; United Nations; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Office for Project Services; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; United Nations University; World Food Programme; World Health Organization; African Development Bank; Commonwealth Secretariat; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Inter-American Development Bank; International Development Law Organization; OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Pacific Islands Forum; UN Women; United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; United Nations Population Fund; World Trade Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development; Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law; International Telecommunication Union; International Centre for Migration Policy Development; International Monetary Fund; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; United Nations Institute for Training and Research; Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; International Labour Organization; World Meteorological Organization; International Tropical Timber Organization; Southern African Development Community
Treated (Without increased major principal priority)	African Union; Association of South East Asian Nations; CGIAR System Organization; European Investment Bank; International Development Research Centre; International Livestock Research Institute; Caribbean Development Bank; International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics; European Commission; European External Action Service; European Forest Institute; European Union; Asian Productivity Organization; CABI; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; Council of the European Union; European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control; European Council; European Institute of Innovation and Technology; European Stability Mechanism; Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights; Islamic Development Bank; OPEC Fund for International Development; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; New Development Bank; European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts; SAARC Development Fund; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Control (IOs distant from the shock)	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice; International Agency for Research on Cancer; International Commission on Missing Persons

Table D2: Paris Agreement Analysis: International Organizations by Treatment Status

Treated (Decreased major principal priority, all IOs)	African Development Bank; Asian Development Bank; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Inter-American Development Bank; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Monetary Fund; International Organization for Migration; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; The World Bank Group; UN Women; United Nations; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; United Nations Institute for Training and Research; United Nations Office for Project Services; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; United Nations University; World Food Programme; World Health Organization; Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; International Development Law Organization; International Finance Corporation; International Labour Organization; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; World Meteorological Organization; International Tropical Timber Organization; Pan American Health Organization; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation; International Fund for Agricultural Development; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; International Renewable Energy Agency
Treated (Decreased major principal priority, development IOs)	African Development Bank; Asian Development Bank; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Inter-American Development Bank; International Monetary Fund; The World Bank Group; United Nations Development Programme; International Development Law Organization; International Finance Corporation; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; International Fund for Agricultural Development
Control (IOs without principal priority change)	African Union; CGIAR System Organization; Caribbean Development Bank; Council of the European Union; European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control; European Council; European Institute of Innovation and Technology; European Stability Mechanism; European Union; Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources; International Centre for Migration Policy Development; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Association of South East Asian Nations; European Commission; European Forest Institute; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights; Islamic Development Bank; OPEC Fund for International Development; Pacific Islands Forum; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; European External Action Service; International Livestock Research Institute; New Development Bank; Southern African Development Community; European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts; SAARC Development Fund; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning; East African Community; European Central Bank; European Free Trade Association; European Investment Bank; European Investment Fund; European Patent Office; Nordic Development Fund; CABI; European Police Office; Council of Europe Development Bank; European Institute for Gender Equality; Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; Asian Productivity Organization; Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; European Organization for Nuclear Research; European Union Intellectual Property Office; African Ministers' Council on Water; UNESCO Institute for Statistics; Union for the Mediterranean

Table D3: Trump Entering Office Analysis: International Organizations by Treatment Status

Table D4: Interrupted Time Series Estimates

Effect	$0 \leq t \leq 2$	$t \geq 0$	$t > 0$
Panel A: AI increased salience to major principal			
Immediate level change	0.278* (0.176)	0.214** (0.119)	0.107 (0.089)
Time trend	0.018 (0.070)	0.002 (0.044)	0.048 (0.051)
Post-intervention trend change	-0.056 (0.161)	-0.022 (0.059)	-0.072 (0.064)
Panel B: AI without increased salience to major principal			
Immediate level change	0.115 (0.101)	0.032 (0.056)	-0.105** (0.057)
Time trend	0.006 (0.011)	0.003 (0.011)	0.025* (0.019)
Post-intervention trend change	-0.106** (0.057)	-0.012 (0.013)	-0.020 (0.019)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

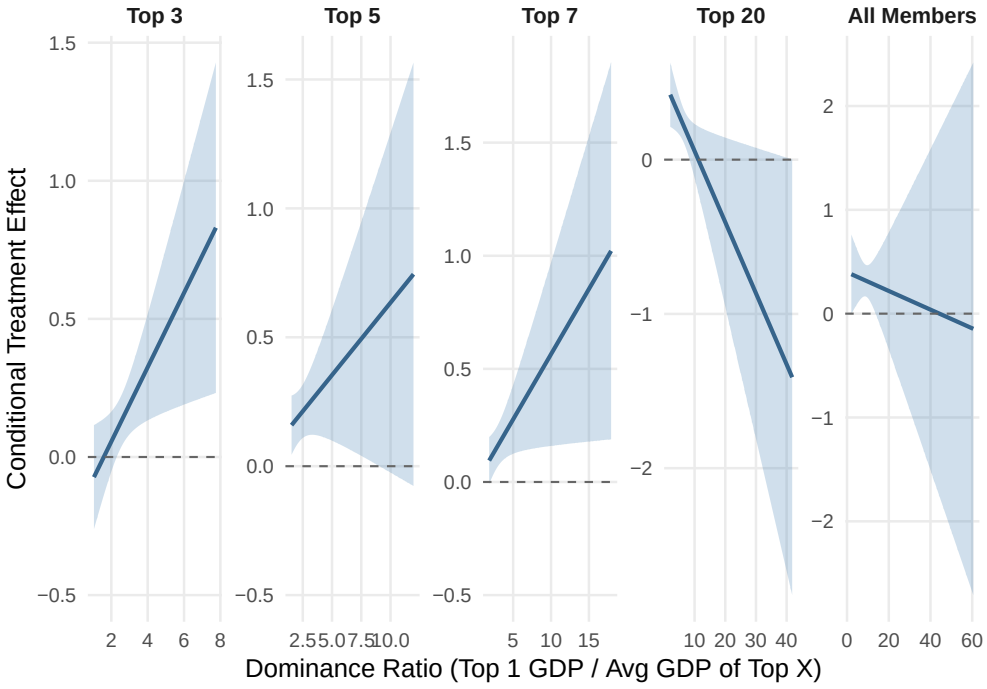
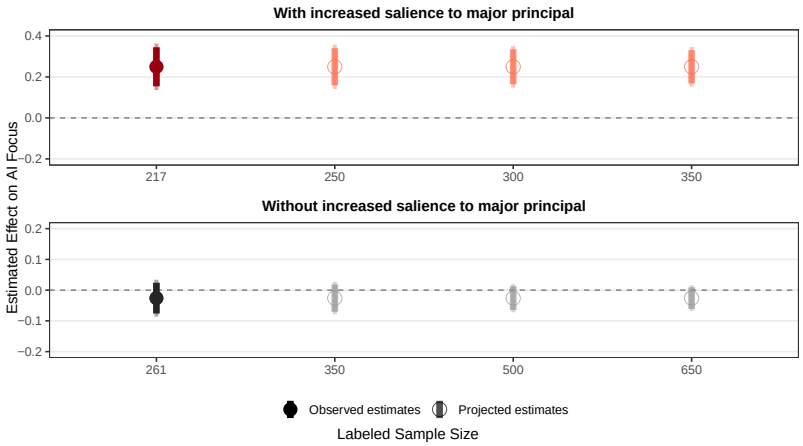


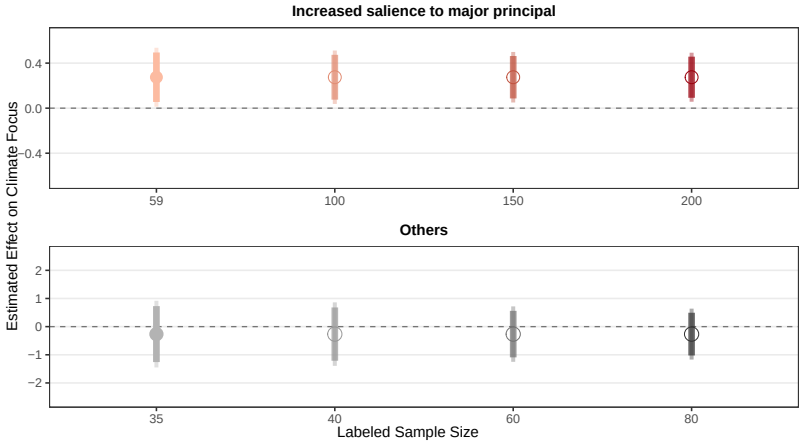
Figure D2: Power Concentration and the Conditional Effect of Global Challenge on the AI Focus of IOs with Increased Principal Priority

Note: The figure plots the conditional effect of the global AI challenge on IOs' AI and telecommunications focus when the level of power concentration varies, among IOs whose major principal increase attention to AI. Each panel uses a different definition of the top member group for calculating the dominance ratio (Dominant state GDP / Average GDP of Top X). The model also controls for the average state priority in the corresponding group. Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. The concentration of power only within the most powerful member states amplifies the expansion of IOs into AI.

Panel A: AI expansion in non-AI IOs (ChatGPT release)



Panel B: Climate expansion in non-climate IOs (Paris Agreement & UNGA 2015)



Panel C: Climate expansion in U.S.-dominated IOs (Trump election 2016)

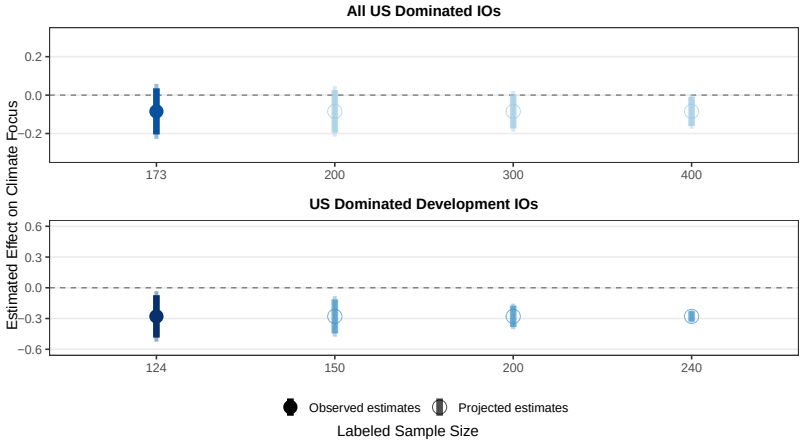
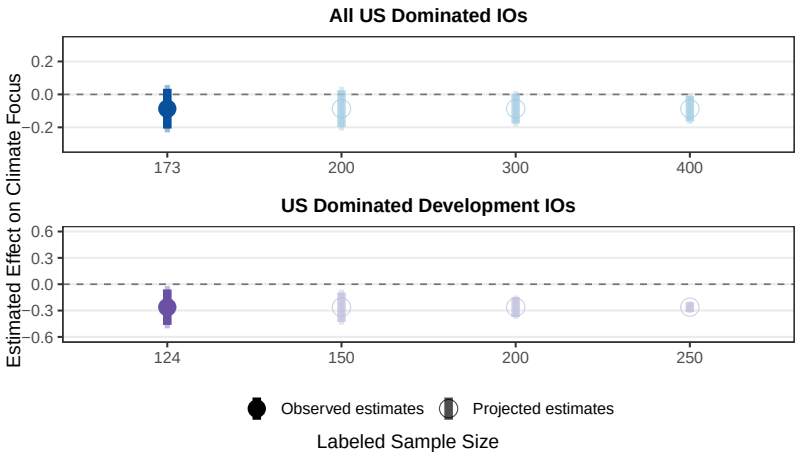


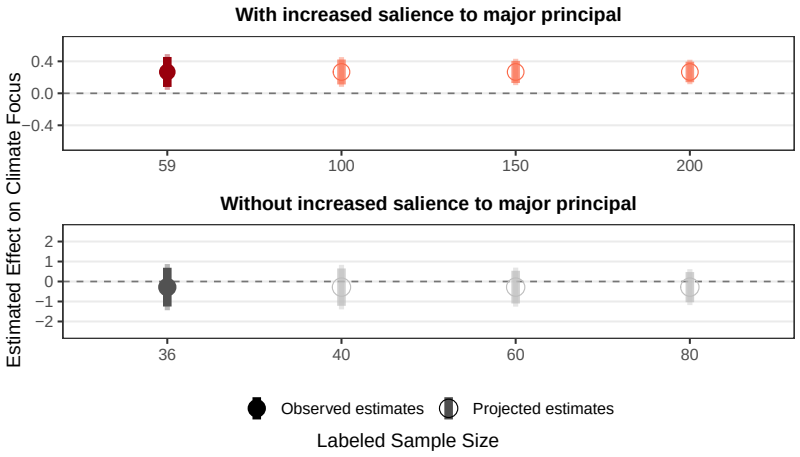
Figure D3: Bureaucratic Expansion: Robustness to Missing Data

Note: This figure replicates the baseline analyses after randomly removing 5% of European IO postings. Points represent average treatment effects with 90% (thick) and 95% (thin) confidence intervals. Estimates on the left (solid dots, darker color) use the observed hand-coded data; remaining estimates are projected values from a DSL power analysis assuming additional hand-coded data.

Panel A: AI expansion in non-AI IOs (ChatGPT release)



Panel B: Climate expansion in non-climate IOs (Paris Agreement & UNGA 2015)



Panel C: Climate expansion in U.S.-dominated IOs (Trump election 2016)

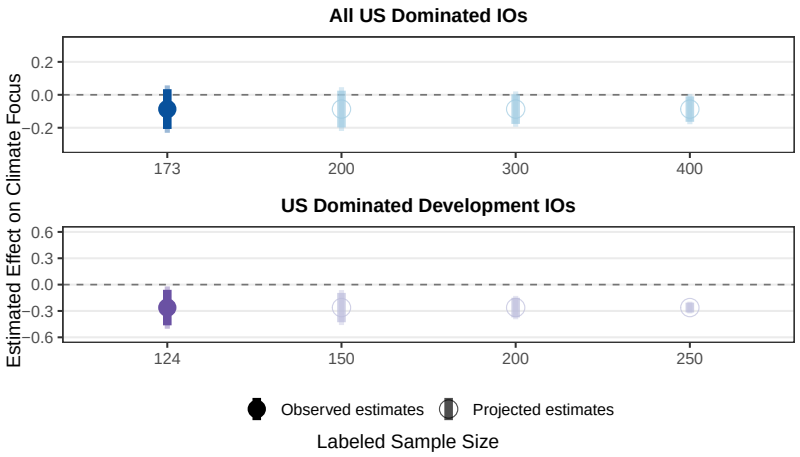


Figure D4: Bureaucratic Expansion: Robustness to Removing UN

Note: This figure replicates the baseline analyses after removing United Nations. Points represent average treatment effects with 90% (thick) and 95% (thin) confidence intervals. Estimates on the left (solid dots, darker color) use the observed hand-coded data; remaining estimates are projected values from a DSL power analysis assuming additional hand-coded data.

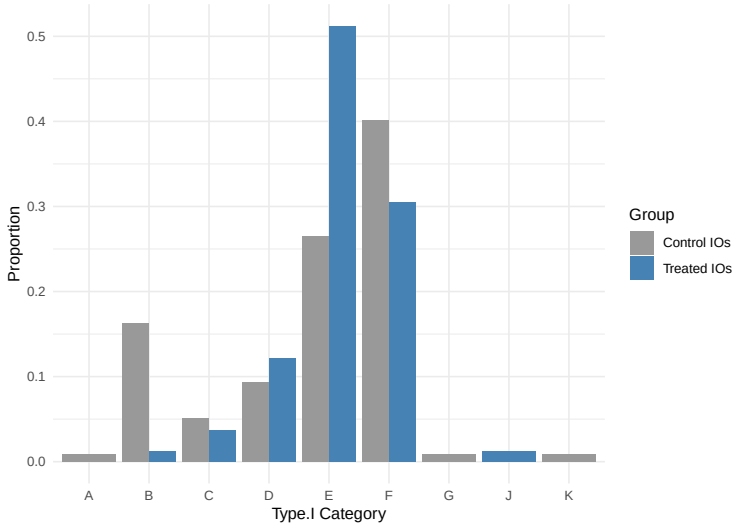


Figure D5: Comparison of IO Type: IOs With and Without Major Principal Prioritizing AI

Note: IO types are coded using the Yearbook of International Organizations. IO Type.I are defined as follows: A Federations of international organizations; B Universal membership organizations; C Intercontinental membership organizations; D Regionally defined membership organizations; E Organizations emanating from places, persons, or other bodies; F Organizations having a special form; G Internationally oriented national organizations; J Recently reported or proposed international organizations; K Subsidiary and internal bodies.

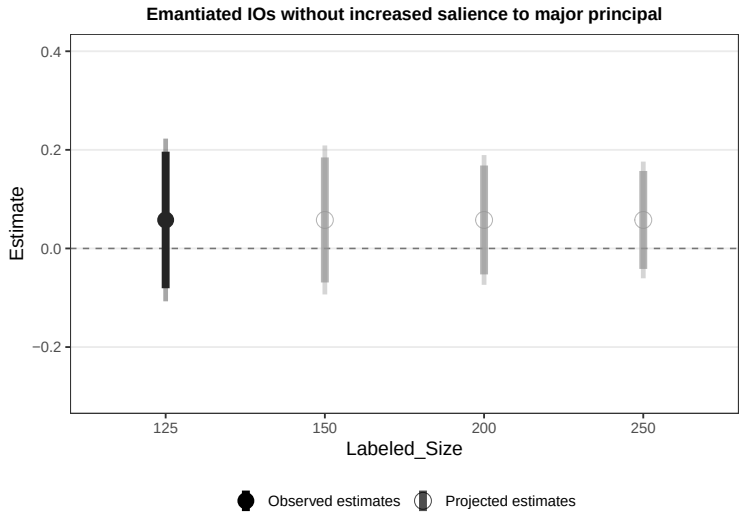
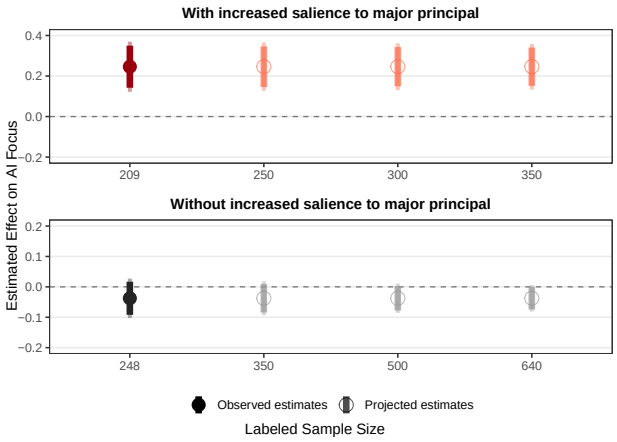


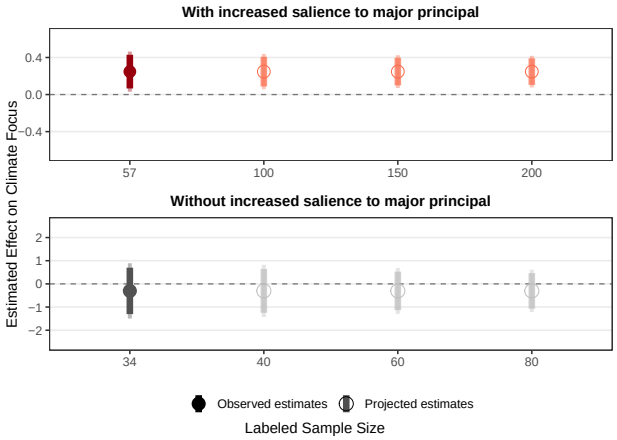
Figure D6: Emanated IOs Without Increased AI Salience to Major Principal

Note: Points represent average treatment effects with 90% (thick) and 95% (thin) confidence intervals. Estimates on the left (solid dots, darker color) use the observed hand-coded data; remaining estimates are projected values from a DSL power analysis assuming additional hand-coded data.

Panel A: AI expansion in non-AI IOs (ChatGPT release)



Panel B: Climate expansion in non-climate IOs (Paris Agreement & UNGA 2015)



Panel C: Climate expansion in U.S.-dominated IOs (Trump election 2016)

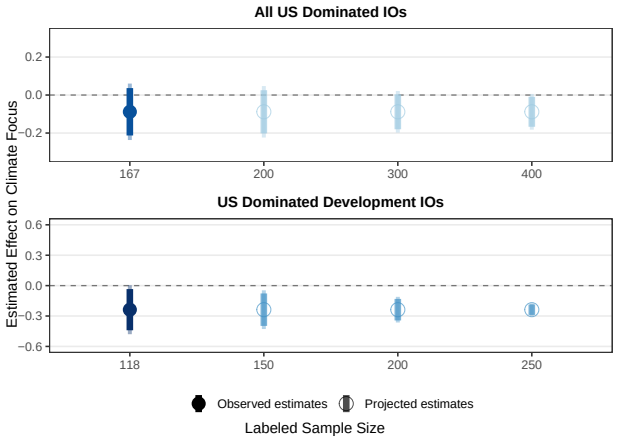


Figure D7: Bureaucratic Expansion: Robustness to Alternative Control Groups

Note: This figure replicates the baseline analyses after randomly removing three control group IOs. The climate-Paris analysis uses the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance as the control to ensure the control group exists in all periods. Points represent average treatment effects with 90% (thick) and 95% (thin) confidence intervals. Estimates on the left (solid dots, darker color) use the observed hand-coded data; remaining estimates are projected values from a DSL power analysis assuming additional hand-coded data.

Table D5: Lagged Earmarked Climate Funding and IO Focus

Panel A: Lagged Effects (t-2)				
	IO Focus on Climate			
Climate Disbursed	-5.407×10^{-5}			
	(4.783×10^{-4})			
Climate Committed		2.289×10^{-4}		
		(1.665×10^{-4})		
Prop. Climate Disbursed			0.0169	
			(0.0258)	
Prop. Climate Committed				−0.0355
				(0.0580)
Num.Obs.	854	854	854	854
R2	0.772	0.773	0.772	0.773
R2 Adj.	0.726	0.726	0.726	0.726
RMSE	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
IO FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Panel B: Lagged Effects (t-3)				
Climate Disbursed	2.962×10^{-4}			
	(4.424×10^{-4})			
Climate Committed		0.0000		
		(1.957×10^{-4})		
Prop. Climate Disbursed			0.0020	
			(0.0197)	
Prop. Climate Committed				−0.0276
				(0.0335)
Num.Obs.	812	812	812	812
R2	0.760	0.760	0.760	0.760
R2 Adj.	0.714	0.713	0.713	0.714
RMSE	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
IO FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Note: Panel A presents the effect of climate earmarked funding on IO's focus on climate two years later. Panel B presents the same result for three years later.